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SPANISH DOLLARS

IT WAS A FIGHT OF SHADOWS, BUT I HAVE TO CONFESS THAT VAN VEEN FASCINATED MY OBSERVATION

SPANISH DOLLARS

A Story of Early American Days

BY

REGINALD WRIGHT KAUFFMAN

ILLUSTRATED BY

MANNING DE V. LEE

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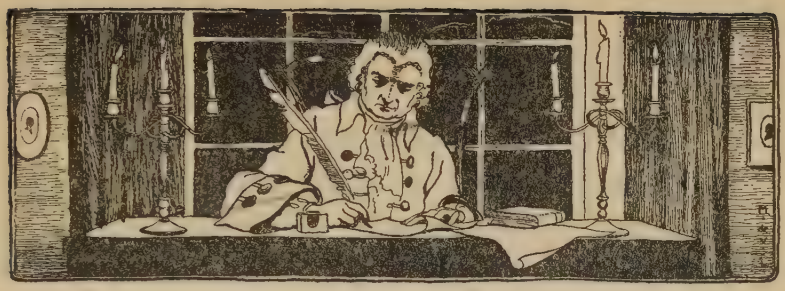

SPANISH DOLLARS

CHAPTER I

RED MAN'S COUNTRY

INASMUCH as my grandchildren have looked favorably on the account I gave them of our family's establishment upon this Western Continent, asking subsequent details of our early trials—but more, doubtless, through the fond vanity of a graybeard who loves recalling for new generations the days and doings of his own youth—I now (May, 1782) propose to set down a history of what befell me in the Northern Wilderness so many hundred leagues from our Hempfield home. The which to do, I turn back again to a time when these United States were the Hanoverian usurper's: the period was that wherein General Washington

trained as a land-surveyor for the Valley of Virginia —wherein Mr. Benjamin Franklin served as Philadelphia's postmaster—and wherein the first beginnings of our glorious Revolution were but shadowy hopes to quicken the beating of the most daring hearts amongst us all.

If my incredible chronicle seems at first meaningless, that is the way life seems until half over. If the mystery now daunts you and again appears to doze while alien adventures shoot redly across its dreams, be assured that fate never really sleeps, and that all of a man's experiences are joint pieces in a single puzzle. Until my first prisoner vanishes in the swamp, you may think me going through a mere hodgepodge of perils: on the contrary, you will find that Deadeye and Mahogany-Face, the murderous attack on the Charles River Flats and my imprisonment in the *Vigilant's* burning forehold are all bound together by two frail pieces of birch bark.

It was in the early Autumn of '44 that those strange events began which were to enlist me with Sir William Pepperell's desperate enterprise; and it was in the forests of the Connecticut Valley (of all places in the world!) that my first unguessing step was taken upon a long and devious trail, begun—little as I surmised it—

off the Chilean coast and the wastes of Tierra del Fuego, and destined to end in face of the grim fortress of Nova Scotia's Louisburg, on the lonely peninsula of Cape Breton Island. My rash adventure started on the afternoon when Hiram Cobb and I discovered that campfire of the mysterious Indian, Alexander.

A warm September found us in a district where we should never have been: Hi, whose farmer father's home lay among the Green Mountains, and me, Nicholas Rowntree, then, as now, resident in Pennsylvania; but both of us students at Harvard College, Township of Cambridge, Province of Massachusetts Bay. Hiram was earning his course by such work as he could find; profiting nothing from his example, I, with no great love of letters, spent the time paid for by my father's last pennies in an idleness that I take shame to remember.

For at home much had of late gone ill. Though a parent once prisoner in London Tower was released and come to the Colonies—though a disgraceful step-uncle was driven from my sight and most of his thievings returned to us[1]—though the Lord Proprietor Thomas Penn and Mr. Magistrate John Wright had

[1] See "The Ranger of the Susquehannock," the first of "The Rowntree Chronicles."

been bountiful in assistance, yet the new land and the new ways were scarce suited to my father's habits and upbringing, and, strive as he might and did to turn his better hand to novel requirements, our crops failed, our lands shrank, and mortgages weighed sorely upon what remained to us. Unless some quick turn in the family fortunes occurred, my academical career was like to be short-lived indeed.

That, however, was all that troubled me, and nothing save a conscience warning of neglected studies, just then troubled Hiram Cobb. Across the ocean, red war raged; but we lads, like many of our grown neighbors, laughed at the thought that it would ever affect our comfort. While England's George and the French Louis fought each other overseas, little did we Americans, shaping our separate future, understand the so-called Pragmatic Sanction or care whether Britain's candidate or the candidate of Versailles was finally seated on a contested European throne. The nearest French to us were in Canada; so the Colonies went about their business—and Hi and I went hunting.

From the outset, misfortune went with us. Though we had a full week of leisure before being due to resume our studies at Indian House, where we lodged while in

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college, an unlooked-for scarcity of game drew us too far into the solitudes. My urgings conquered my companion's Yankee caution: we soon passed the ultimate tokens of civilization; nay, somewhat later we passed those days in going forward which we ought to have used for going back. Then at last (it was one afternoon upon a viewless hilltop, where crowding birches had somehow succeeded mighty oaks) Hi cried out that we had overstayed our time, and I admitted that we were lost.

"Oh, they will discipline us when we get back to Cambridge," said I; "but I shan't care."

Hi sat himself on a rotting log and gazed gloomily at the canopy of interlaced branches above us.

"We shall never get back!" he groaned.

"Poof!" I said, as boldly as I might.

He was an excellent fellow and generally followed my leadership; besides which—thanks to the Pennsylvania tuition of Edward Cartlidge—my woodcraft was superior and so acknowledged. Nevertheless, Cobb yet possessed that prodigious conscience of the New Englander, adding always thereto the darkest forebodings: he thought we should have passed our brief holiday in study and that here was punishment for not so doing.

If there existed any means of making a bad situation worse, trust blue-eyed Hiram to find them!

"We shall die here!" he concluded.

Now, the truth is that I myself had just begun to fear that perhaps we should; but it would never do for me, as commander of our expedition (and, moreover, the one responsible for our predicament) to admit it. So I put my best endeavor into a laugh of denial.

"Why," said I, "we have only to use our eyes and our rifles."

Whereat, as if certain soon to find somewhat to raise his spirits, I stepped across the log. I had no idea of discovering aught of real comfort; I thought solely to silence his words by the spectacle of action—yet now fortune, so long morose, seemed immediately to come to my boast as a dog answers its master's whistle; for here in that log's shelter were exposed the half-obliterated remains of an extinguished campfire!

The mere certainty of a recent human presence in these wilds blinded me for all examination of detail. Still, although struck a-tremble with delight, I pretended to no surprise.

"Look at these ashes," I said. "They are yet warm. Already help is close by."

Came a disconcerting answer. Hiram's pessimism furnished him the caution that my exuberance lacked. He gave one look. His pink cheeks paled, and says he:

"You call this help? More like, it's death." His voice sank. "Why, can't you see? That was the fire of an Indian!"

He whispered me why he thought so, and then I indeed observed that the twigs had been raised on pebbles in the red men's way. I own that my heart sank. Still, I would not openly surrender to his fears or admit myself entirely wrong. What, I asked, if these *were* the traces of an Indian? Rumors of widespread discontent among the aborigines were running wild in Boston, but not since the Deerfield Massacre had there been overt trouble in these parts. In our plight, the neighborhood of a man of any color must be welcome. Why not at least investigate?

"Don't!" pleaded Hiram.

I scarce heard him. I saw a fresh leaf fallen from a bush that we had not passed: someone else must have gone thither. Determined to vindicate my superior forest-knowledge, I, heedless of Hi's repeated warning, announced the intention of scouting along this trail alone.

I waved Cobb back; a moment later, the thicket, closing like a door behind me, shut him from sight.

Warily I pressed forward. Seventy-five yards—perhaps a hundred—I went, and then was standing between two white birches on the edge of a small declivity, and looking down into a treeless dell at such a sight as I hope never to see again.

Like the man in Scripture, "I have been young and now am old," yet that event which then appeared is as vivid as if it appeared a day ago. The dell was green with tender grass and sweet with sunlight; the background was as peaceful as Paradise; but in the centre of the picture lay, face upward, what appeared to be an aged Indian, and over him bent a young brave. The former must have turned too late to defend himself; the latter had struck one felling knife-blow, and now his red blade was raised to bring the bloody business to an end.

Why his forest-trained ears had failed to catch the herald-noise of my approach I might not surmise, except that his appetite for murder stopped them: as I stood spellbound, he looked up, and, through one fraction of flying time, I studied that savage countenance. It exhibited no war-paint, nor was there any on the lithe

body, bare to its waist; but the bronze skin was drum-tight over facial muscles contracted in a perfect paroxysm of cruelty, and, across the brief space that separated us, his black eyes launched arrows of thwarted rage.

All this I saw so rapidly as scarce to know aught save that my own life was in peril—all this and one thing more: if the young brave's eyes were a danger, those of the old Indian were an appeal which his resolute lips scorned to utter. Hot upon the heels of these twin realizations, the assassin leaped from his victim's side and, knife still aloft, dashed at me.

I had my rifle. Even as a lad, I was an excellent shot. Without taking thought (it must have looked almost as if without taking aim) I fired.

The brave's arms were flung upward like a puppet's when its owner pulls the string—like Judy's when Punch belabors her. Struck square between his eyes, my enemy fell backward headlong, and the sick sense rose in me that I had killed my first man.

CHAPTER II

THE SACHEM'S LEGACY

TIME there was none for reflection: the elder savage, so grievously wounded as to be in parlous case, deserved my whole care. To him I rushed.

He lay in a pool of blood that frightened me as I forced myself to kneel in it; but I noted that he wore the single eagle-feather of a Sachem, twined in the scalp-lock which his murderer had been about to sever. I noted, too, that the upturned face had a sort of fine dignity unfamiliar to me on the faces of the red men about my own home; and, young as I still was, I noted lastly that his appearance of great age was not so much the effect of years as a result of past hardships and the present fires of some strange fanaticism.

He looked up, this savage, with the eyes of a court-

bred aristocrat who carries his courtesy to the gates of the grave:

"Alexander is grateful," he murmured.

He spoke an uncouth English, but I understood more than his words. I understood that what he had silently appealed for when lying beneath his attacker's lifted knife (and that for which he now thanked me) was not rescue—it was revenge.

I desired to be of further service than that, and I therefore raised his head. When I did so, the blood poured yet more freely from a hideous chest-wound, and I had immediately to lower him. Then I attempted to staunch the flow. As I was so engaged, Hi arrived: for all his caution, he was no coward when action pressed and, having heard my shot, came running along the trail.

"What's this?" he panted, and when I had told him what I knew: "Yes, a Sachem—and a Wampanoag! That's the tribe made infamous hereabout in King Philip's War. Well, he mustn't talk—a few words more, in his condition, will be the death of him."

To my thinking, the wounded Indian showed certain tokens (his fringed jerkin and a string of red beads) associated with the distant Ottawas and Ojibwas, of whom a wandering few had oddly appeared from time to time

at our settlement on the Susquehanna, and whose visits were ever followed by unrest, and sometimes active trouble, among the Pennsylvania tribes. Red men, I knew, often made strangely long and unaccountable journeys, and I recalled having heard gossip of a "Delaware Prophet" preaching sedition as far west as the Muskingum; yet what either Ojibwa or Ottawa would be doing here in the Valley of the Connecticut I could in no wise conjecture.

Cogitation on this topic was terminated by its subject. With a quiet smile, he protested (and, after all these years, I can hear him yet):

"Speech matters nothing. Dying anyhow."

It was then I bethought me that his English had a Gallic accent. Now, as Providence willed, I had learned something of the Frenchmen's language awhile since from my protector, Sir Geoffrey Faulkner, when he was in hiding over the Maryland border; more I later acquired at college and to this store added in my weekly wanderings along Boston's water-front, where, despite the hostilities abroad, French smugglers from Canada were by no means uncommon. Straightway I here proudly (but with much distress for his condition) addressed my sorely stricken patient in that tongue.

"What was yonder savage who did this thing?" I cried. "And why did he do it—*why?*"

It is to be understood that, all this while, we scared lads had been trying to ease the Sachem's plight—cutting away his jerkin and endeavoring to staunch that crimson outpouring which could indeed be stopped by no earthly skill. Moment by moment, he grew visibly weaker; we thought that we could see his rugged frame shrink and dwindle. We would have said he was as good as gone, and yet, at my attempt to use a speech that must be less difficult for him than our native one, his wrinkled face became well-nigh beautiful.

"A red-men's quarrel," he answered. "My enemy—would not have told—I must not."

French he spoke like a Frenchman and without trace of the Indian manner of thought or its expression; but the words came from his stiffening lips almost as separate things, and each cost him, I doubt not, a separate pain.

"Get me—birch-bark," he commanded—and to command he was plainly accustomed. "I shall write—something for you."

Instinctively I obeyed him, running up the dellside and tearing a piece of dry bark from one of the birches

there. When I had come back, he dipped (it was terrible to see) a finger in his wound and, with a weak yet steady hand, traced certain rude red pictures on the little wooden strip.

His voice was now chopped by a dry cough, and there came a rattling into his sinewy throat:

"Take this—show—Abenakis—Mic-Macs—and in—my scalplock—another—like it ——"

He coughed. His lips having long paled, I saw to my despair the gleam of flowing blood again upon them.

"He *mustn't* talk!" protested Hi, who barely comprehended one syllable of what had been so laboriously uttered.

"Who are the Mic-Macs?" I asked. "And the Abenakis?"

"They are ——"

Hi interrupted distractedly:

"If he talks, he will die! I have heard of the Mic-Macs; they are some far northern tribe. Those others I know nothing of." My friend seized my arm. "Cannot you see that his mind weakens? Why vex the man with questions?"

Yet I understood that silence would not save the Sachem and could see that he struggled to resume

speech. Feebly he shook his head—its eagle's feather scarce vibrated. He essayed to whisper somewhat, and failed; he tried to raise his hand to his mouth, but proved too weak, and I wiped it for him.

"Let him rest!" wailed Hi.

Rest? He was to begin his long rest soon enough, in all conscience! That he knew. Voicelessly, he formed another order:

"Toward—the sun!"

I had heard how red men preferred to die. The sun of this day was now declined to the level of the surrounding tree-tops. I durst not move all his body, but I shifted his head and shoulders ever so little, that he might front the last yellow rays.

What next happened stands forth none too vividly in my mind, for, truth to tell, emotion partially veiled my eyes. I know, however, that Hi, having drawn back, had his hands before his face; I know that I knelt beside the heathen Sachem and tried to pray; and I know that the warm gold light of early Autumn poured across the trees into that green dell, lapping with peaceful waves the body of the murderer I had killed and bathing gently all the form of his scarce-breathing victim.

The Sachem's mind did not wander now. He looked

at the sun with eyes which might have been that eagle's of whose feathers one adorned his head; but when he achieved speech for the last time, he relapsed into his native tongue, excepting a phrase of French.

" You understand—the other boy does not . . ."

The rest was an Indian dialect unintelligible to me—and I had no opportunity to tell him so.

Quite suddenly, he raised himself to a sitting posture. I made to support him; he brushed me off. Straight—straight into the light he gazed. His voice rang loud in the solitude. Then a great burst of blood gushed from his mouth, and he collapsed on the lush grass.

" Hi," I called, " come closer! "

For I was afraid. Mysteries of life that I could not reckon upon lay in that whereof I had been made inheritor—living mysteries; and long, far journeys by icy sea and unknown land; and treachery and battle among fiercer races and alien scenes—but all the mystery that I could then feel was the mystery of this Indian's end. Here were now a pair of dead men beside us, and we two lads, Hi and I, were more than ever alone in the wilderness.

CHAPTER III

MAHOGANY-FACE

ALREADY, twilight was approaching.

"Let's begone," says Hi.

I wanted nothing better; but there were things that, willy nilly, had first to be done, and, lost as we were, there could be no gain for us from a blind-man's-buff plunge into this soon darkening wilderness.

"Gone?" I asked. "Whither?"

"I don't know," said Hi, "and I don't care. Anywhere. But here I *won't* remain."

"Very well," I temporized; "I am with you—after we have"—and I pointed to the two forms upon the grass—"after we have buried these."

He flung up his hands. "Are you mad, Nick? The friends of that murderer may be not five miles behind him."

About that I had not thought, and I own that the suggestion of it sent a quiver up my spine. Still, it seemed an indecent thing to leave those bodies to the beasts of the wild—and one of the men had fallen at my hand. I said as much.

"Do *you* want to fall at the hand of one of his fellow-savages?" Hi demanded. He laid hold of me. "Look you: I am not afraid of a fight with even numbers; but why should we risk ourselves against Heaven knows how many Indians who are familiar to these woods—and that in a cause that we do not understand and that is not ours? Besides"—and he gave a frank shudder—"if I've no fear for the living, I've no stomach for the—for the company of folk that *aren't* alive."

The first portion of his plea was specious: he could only surmise that other savages might be near, notwithstanding that an assumption of some such sort was clearly prudent. A dread of the dead, however, I myself just then felt too keenly to admit; I would not confess to it, so I compromised:

"Well, I shall say a bit of prayer for these poor heathen souls, anyhow."

And I did it. First I compelled my reluctant hands

to composing the inanimate bodies—a task wherein my companion stubbornly refused any assistance, asserting that one of us must needs be on the lookout, and that that one would be he. Then I knelt, nor was I in this alone: burning to get away from there, Hi, yet foregoing his sentryship, knelt beside me, though his blue eyes roved the circle of the bush around us, and though no boy was ever gladder to say "Amen" at a petition's end or more quickly jumped up when he had said it.

"Amen-and-now-let's-go!" gasped Hiram in a single breath.

"There's one thing more," I postponed, for I was Yorkshire born and have ever stood out for what belonged to me. "I must take from this chief's scalp-lock the somewhat that he said I might."

Hi groaned, but I would not heed. With fingers that trembled, I unwound the twisted hair above the Sachem's skull.

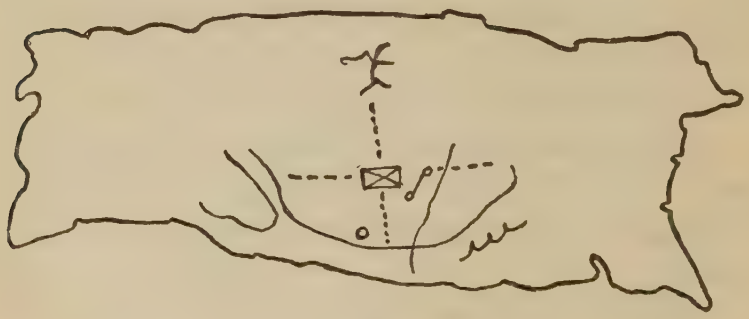
"Come away!" urged Hi.

A small piece of tightly rolled bark slid into my open palm. I laid it beside me and did my best toward reshaping the lock to that traditional form in which I had found it.

"Hurry!" whispered Hi.

But I knew he would be as loath to leave without me as he was to remain with me in this doleful dell. For my part, curiosity was stronger then than apprehension: I had indeed thrust the fresh bark into my jacket when the Sachem gave it to me; but now I drew it forth and examined it and the older piece together, as well as the slowly failing light allowed.

The newer, still fresh with that Indian's life-blood, was a more or less ordered procession of figures meaningless to me; the other was equally meaningless and its drawings quite confounded. It gave evidence of a few years' age; its wood was dry and in one place split, and its characters had been writ or drawn with a dark liquid. I can reproduce the thing from memory, and have good cause for being able so to do:



By now, Hi was peering over my shoulder.

"And you stopped for *that!*" he cried.

What I had expected I do not know; but certainly not such crazy stuff. Its tracings gave me no faintest hint of what it was destined to prove. Chagrin assailed me:

"What is the thing?"

"An Indian charm—a mere piece of red superstition!"

"Are you sure?"

His indignation rose. He stood back and gazed at me with a certain contempt, as though I were a child, and said:

"Sure? Perhaps I have never seen the exact likeness, but things of the sort are common enough hereabouts. You could buy one in Boston for two farthings of any trader from the north. Your delay has risked our lives—for a trifle like this! Come away, and at once!"

Well, my curiosity was satisfied, and it seemed that I had indeed sought nothing of account. The quest ignominiously ended, my friend's mood became mine. The shadows of the trees had swept clean across that dell; twilight deepened, and the grisly figures on the sward lay very still. Doubtless those silly bits were of an ilk;

I shoved them both into my jacket and thought no more about them.

"Yes," said I; "we'll go."

Not we—not yet! For at this instant a startling thing befell; from the little crest which we had descended to come hither, a loud voice rang out:

"Ahoy there!"

I think we must both have jumped a yard into the air. I know we turned to run.

"Belay that!" came a roar which brought us up short.

After all, this was no avenging Indian: the man was talking a kind of English. Hi realized it, too. We faced about.

Already our intruder was down the declivity and advancing toward us with a queer run that had a wide roll to it, and a more unlikely character for the forest (where nevertheless he had evidently been for many a day) I could not well have imagined. He was full six feet five in height and wide of shoulder out of all proportion, clad in outer clothes which must once have consisted of a short jacket and trousers flaring wide at their bottoms, but now by briar and bramble torn into ribbons; and upon the back of his big head perched a low-

crowned hat with wide, flat rim—a sailorman if ever I'd set eyes on one.

He swung up to us and, seeing our age, returned to his belt a lengthy pistol.

"Come about," says he.

Now I could observe him well. He had long arms and hands like hams; he was a perfect picture of strength, but his remarkable face was somehow winning for its expression of boyish courage and its radiation of adventure. It was broad, but not heavy, and, from blistering suns and biting storms, the color of mahogany. Not the copious red hair that hung about it over his ears, nor yet the rufous beard that was more than sprouted on his cheeks, could lessen his effect of young enthusiasm combined with mature daring. When you looked at those bright brown eyes, at that stubborn nose and sensitive mouth, you had visions of dread deeds done on the high seas, but done always bravely and in a cause that at least the doer considered just.

"Now, my lads ——" he began.

And thereat he caught sight of the dead. The younger he spared no second look, but the Sachem's body brought a sharp sound from those tightened lips.

"Who did this job?"

He had darted to us from the corpse, and his large fingers were again at his pistol.

"Why—why ——" stammered Hiram.

The stranger's brown eyes went as red as his hair. "Tell the truth! I'll keelhaul any sea-cook who ——" Then, evidently remembering that two young lads could be no desperate characters, he spoke with less violence and to me. "Where's the man that did this? That's what I want to know."

Still a bit startled, "Why," says I, "the young buck killed the Sachem, and I shot the young buck."

"You?" he demanded incredulously.

I nodded, and his studying gaze believed me. He sprang back to the chief's body (he was marvellous quick for such height), and his wide hands ran over it and over it. Then he shook his head, abandoned the task and asked:

"What were you about here?"

I told our story.

"You saw none else in the dell? The murderer had no mate?"

"There was only the young brave and the old Sachem."

Mahogany-Face thought for a moment, and he was

plainly of those to whom action comes easy and thought unpleasant.

" Hum," says he at last; " only they two—by the time you sighted this spot. Well, my lad, you may lay to one thing: there'd been somebody else not a minute before. Belike he hid at your coming and was glad enough that you should rid him of his accomplice—for he'd got what he wanted. He'll be laying his course for the nearest port—and that's Boston—now." The stranger rolled across the dell as if an hour's walk would bring him to civilization. " It's a stern-chase, but that I'm used to."

A strong soul! It seemed, as he spoke, that he indeed might immediately bring us to Cambridge by some miracle of his human energy—that he would bring us there eventually I never questioned. How could it be expected that I should connect his presence here with the Sachem's legacy to me? My recent terror of the forest and its savage denizens was forgotten; Hi and I, making almost two steps apiece to this conductor's one, were already side-by-side with him, and it was only Hi that entertained any doubt.

" You know the way, sir? " Cobb inquired.

The answer began with a snort. " I know how to find any way while there are stars in heaven."

Boys are queer cattle. Here was Hi occupied with our rescue from the wilderness and would forget it as soon as it was accomplished; my mind ran upon the recent past and would forget that once I was safe again in college.

" So someone was with the buck?" I pressed.

"Aye, aye!" Our guide began to climb the dellside.

" Was it another brave?"

" If a shark's brave! Aye, and I can make this shark's picture for you." The stranger had reached the birches; from one of us to the other he looked with a grim face. " Make his picture. He was a squirmy cove with a deadeye—and if that isn't Gospel, you may scuttle *me!*"

How could he know this? "A white man?" I ventured.

"As black as Hell," said he.

The last light of day fell upon him, and again he looked a being of awe. His brown eyes flamed in his mahogany face; his lips worked fiercely; at the edges of his hat his red hair seemed alive. Inwardly I vowed an end of questioning!

"As black as Hell," he slowly repeated—and after that would say no more.

Then the evening breeze brushed us and raised those long locks which had hung to his ragged collar. I saw that where his right ear should have been there was nothing but a dark hole and a horrid scar.

CHAPTER IV

SPIES!

TO anyone that has forgotten his youth, it may seem a curious fact that I could put these matters out of memory during the weeks which followed, and should not have them much in mind until they intruded themselves, as they were to do in a manner so startling. Yet thus it was, nor to me does the event appear strange. Lads lead full lives; the life of no general or financier is fuller, and Hi's and mine had much to occupy them aside from what we took for an Indian charm and a violent sailor who tracked an enemy through the wilderness.

Besides which we were on we knew not how many points bound to silence. During those days while he hurried us at breath-robbing speed among the wilds toward the settlements, our guide's manner remained as I

have last recorded it, and there were no further inquiries made nor any more information given; even an intended mention of the Sachem's gifts to me died before utterance. Nevertheless, Hi and I had been quite lost; we undoubtedly owed our lives to Mahogany-Face, and so, when he demanded a promise, we needs must give it him.

CLEVELAND CO. SCHOOLS

That happened exactly as soon as we came to the edge of safe territory, where the remainder of our route lay plain before us:

" Now, mates," said our rescuer, who spoke ever like a man of some education, for all the sea-salt with which he sprinkled his few phrases, " it's here we part. From this spot you can't go wrong, and you are tired and I am not—and I must forge ahead of you and get quickly about my own business in Boston."

It was a plain hint given in a fashion not to be disregarded. Hi looked at me, and I nodded. Then I made some mention of reward, but at that Mahogany-Face flashed hot indignation.

"And no thanks, either," he concluded. "Just pass me your word as young gentlemen to keep a close mouth about what you've seen and heard back there in the woods, and I'll be more than satisfied."

We were paused on a little hill that overlooked a cleared and kindly valley with farmhouses in it, and a more comfortable sight than the smoke rising from their kitchen-chimneys I had seldom witnessed. Here this red tatterdemalion creature was even more out of place than under yonder trees.

"Your word," he went on insistently. "For what has happened has to do with a purely private affair which can't hurt or help you or yours. Come now—belay there!"

Well, we promised and, of course, later, we kept our word, I until such time as relieved of my part in the bargain. So Mahogany-Face took both our hands in his hamlike ones and smiled at us with his vivid lips and glared at us out of his red-brown eyes.

"Good," says he. "Remember: it won't hurt or help either you or yours—and if that isn't Gospel, you may scuttle *me!*"

Whereupon he ran—or rather rolled—down the hill into the valley and was shortly lost to our sight.

Hi talked about it—to me alone, be it understood. He thought the man was some sort of free-trader, as smugglers are still called along the Massachusetts coast, and was certain that we should find ourselves involved

in a catastrophe through our brief traffic with him; but I felt that, in any case, the less said even between ourselves, the better. Then, with our return to college, old duties and old interests asserted their claims upon us both.

I do not mean that I had not at first periods of reflection. The thought of how I had killed a man, albeit a savage and in self-defense, was no pleasant one and did recur, now and again, despite all my efforts to banish it. At other moments, I wondered what a negro—for our guide had spoken of the mysterious unseen as being black—could have been doing in the depths of the Connecticut Valley. I speculated somewhat, too, upon the nature of a " deadeye," for the only deadeye that I knew I had encountered once or twice aboard boats in Boston harbor, and it was not a blind man, but a scored block to hold lanyards in the setting-up of rigging. It was all very puzzling.

Still, as I say, my life was a full one, and all these things waned with time—as soon as we had soothed the Harvard faculty's wrath at the tardiness of our return —up to that moment when they involved themselves in the odd sequel. The very figure of our sailor faded imperceptibly: so ungrateful are the young to those who

help them, and so short are boys' memories of benefits received.

Though Cambridge and Boston slowly became, that Autumn, twin beehives buzzing with rumors, I in no manner connected these—much as they thrilled and excited me—with aught whereof I had knowledge or part in the past. In the first place, there was some gossip of disquiet among the Indians, and in the next there was the once unlooked for approach of the European War toward the Americas.

The bugaboo of the redmen was, to be sure, nothing novel. Not one of the elderly folk of the outlying towns but had heard the war-whoop of massacring savages in the days of King Philip's uprising, nor were such people to be censured if they now often heard it during their dreams. By dreams, however, most of us accounted for their present alarm, although we youngsters sometimes hoped for a reality. The effect of the War was another matter.

" Boston at present swarms with spies," Mr. Wigglesworth warned me. " Nicholas, have a care whom you pick up with and what you say to them."

Nathaniel Wigglesworth, I must tell you, was a Boston merchant, business-correspondent of John Wright,

my Pennsylvania patron. Mr. Wright had commended me to the attention of this man of substance, and I was compelled—for my sins!—to pass my Saturday nights and Sundays at his house.

" Bear in mind my position in the Colony," he added.

He was a member of the Provincial Assembly, a dignity which sate somewhat heavily upon him, so that, being also a great talker, he must prove far more likely game for informers than ever I should be. Nevertheless, his words fired my imagination; so:

" Spies? " I echoed delightedly.

" Swarms with them! " he again asseverated.

This was a Saturday afternoon, and I had come into the town for my weekly ordeal with the lank and sallow Puritan—really, as I now see, an excellent person, though then I dreaded his love for making long prayers at family gatherings, which he convoked on any excuse whatsoever.

" Who are they? " I asked and thought maliciously what a spy of the domestic sort he had here at home in the person of his good wife, Mistress Charity, who pried into all my doings and cross-questioned me like a lawyer.

Mr. Wigglesworth drew down his lips.

" Some are doubtless patriotic Frenchmen, some overzealous Colonials angered by England's oppression of us, and some hired blackguards ready to serve any cause for pay—all anxious to discover whether we shall at last take active part in the war between Britain and France."

"And shall we?" I pressed. " Shall we, Mr. Wigglesworth? "

" That is a matter too grave for light decision."

Perhaps—but I resolved lightly to go spy-seeking! I resolved it (without a word to the Councilor) then and there.

You may well suppose that I was no friend to England. Indeed, I wanted to belong to the young radical party, who were out-and-out separationists and already clamored for a removal of the British yoke. I had attended meetings where hard things were said of Governor William Shirley at the time when, wrangling with the General Court, he failed in his efforts to secure a salary of £1,000, and I heard worse things said daily on Cambridge streets and under Harvard elms about his King. Still, lads love war, being ignorant of its horrors: if we were not ready to fight against England, why, then we had better fight beside her—and one step

in that direction was such a step as this which I now proposed.

How best to set about it, or by what to recognize a spy when seen, I didn't know; yet I was certain it would be a fine thing to lay one by the heels, and I meant to keep my eyes open as I started now upon one of my excursions to the port. It was the execution of this resolve which led to my first sight of the man called Hendrick Van Veen.

CHAPTER V

A QUEER CRAFT

I AM unable to tell you exactly what it was that excited my suspicions against the brigantine. Boston harbor was always full of all sorts of shipping and, being not much of a sailor, but only learned in sea-wisdom at second-hand, I was surely unqualified to discriminate when, apparently, nobody else so much as looked at her askance.

"What *can* be wrong about her?" I asked myself, and found no convincing answer. Certainly there entered my head no such wild thought as that she should have some relation to those forgotten bits of bark that the dying Alexander had given me.

I had borrowed a little boat and was rowing about alone, as I often did of a Saturday afternoon. The day

was fine, the water calm, and my thoughts were free to run upon Mr. Wigglesworth's admonition.

The brigantine was weather-worn, rakish of cut and plainly designed for speed; though her canvas was of course stowed, I could make out that she carried tackle and spars for a full complement—from flying-jib to foretopgallant and a maintopsail—but in those days many skippers did a bit of smuggling beside the ordinary course of their business, and so wisely preferred a craft that could show prying revenue-officers or lumbering men-o'-war a clean pair of heels. Moreover, though she lay well out and far south, being indeed at anchor hard by the waters of Dorchester Bay, she flew the British flag; her papers, true or forged, must have satisfied the port-authorities. And yet, no sooner had I clapped eyes on her than I mistrusted her mission here.

Perhaps it was the mere desire to find something doubtful that moved me, but I invented another excuse and a poorer: the brigantine had a lifeless air. All the other ships I had passed were busy with sailors, whereas this seemed deserted. I let that look of her serve me.

"Here," says I, "is something that wants searching into."

I meant to go aboard, but immediately my trumped-

up reason failed me. There stood a sort of round-house forward on the low deck, and out of this two men appeared.

"Just the same," I insisted, "there's *something* queer"—and pulled ahead.

I being on their starboard quarter, and the men looking to port, they were probably ignorant of my approach, nor could I then obtain any view of their faces; but soon scarce fifty yards separated us, and I made out their vessel's name painted in bold white letters above her hawse-hole:

SPUYTEN DUYVIL
NEW YORK

That lent my suspicion a new pretext, for I thought the paint too fresh and out of keeping with the peeling hull.

Rapidly I formed a new plan: since I could not board her unobserved, I would have speech with some of her officers or crew. I unshipped both my oars, chucked one far overboard and then sculled, from the stern, completely around the brigantine.

"Ahoy!" I called.

I was close on; those men could not have helped but hear me. Besides, they looked up at my clamor. Only, they did not reply to the hail.

I sculled hard for a few strokes more, faced about and made a trumpet of my hands:

"*Spuyten Duyvil,* ahoy!"

They looked now at each other. One of them shook his head, but the second nodded a commanding affirmative and at once shambled into the round-house. He moved with a crab-like walk, but with amazing agility: I could see only that he seemed short and swarthy and dressed like a landsman, or perhaps a sailor in shore-clothes. His companion waited for the door to shut and then gruffly asked me my business.

"And be quick in the telling!" he added.

Concerning *his* occupation there could be no doubt, in any case. I had come alongside by now and might observe him thoroughly as he bent over the rail. Florid, black-eyed and wearing a blue coat fashioned like the rough-weather pea-jacket, but lighter in material, he bore the stamp of the sea all over him and had exactly the blustering manner of your small-craft captain. From the very first, his tone nettled me.

"Are you the master of this brigantine?" I therefore

asked, letting my sense of my own importance get the better of my discretion concerning his.

Pique, effrontery and a certain suspicion flamed out from him. "I am—and what's that to you?" he challenged.

My gorge rose. Clearly the fellow told the truth, yet I indeed had just seen him take an order from the man that had stood beside him. What sort of skipper was this, who, though puffed with a perfect quarter-deck pomposity, would talk to me, against his own will, at the behest of an underling or passenger? Be he what he might, his continued incivility fanned my anger, and I showed it once again.

"I asked you," I hotly explained, "because you wouldn't heed my hail until that other man"—and here I nodded at the closed door of the round-house—"bade you do it."

The captain's face became empurpled. He banged the rail with his fist.

"You impudent puppy!" he roared. "What do you want? If you've come here with any message, deliver it and begone!"

Of course, my own outburst of temper had effectually spoiled with him every chance of my plan's success. I

had schemed to engage him in conversation, hoping that he might be inveigled into dropping some information as to his ship and its purpose. It was now evident that he was not a man easily to betray secrets, if he had any; but I none the less blamed myself for rushing into a position whence it was impossible to seek them. Howbeit, there I was, and there remained nothing save to retreat with dignity.

"I'm nobody's messenger," I said. "I've been for a row and lost an oar ——"

"The more fool you," he interrupted: "in water like this!"

"And," I went on, "as it's a long scull back to Boston, I had intended asking you the kindness of another oar, which I would have returned to-morrow."

It had been a lame tale at its invention, and in the telling it limped sadly. He did not half believe it; he gave me a dark regard that made me glad I was no member of his crew.

"What do you think my ship is?" he demanded.—"A blessed rowing-school for babies?"

That is what I got for my lie, and it served me right. Burning with humiliation, I shoved off and, when I was just clear of his evil grasp, declared:

"I wouldn't take an oar from you as a gift now—no, not if it was made of gold! Your ship? I don't know what she is; but this I guess: there's somewhat mighty strange about her—and that I shall report to Assemblyman Wigglesworth!"

Only a vain boy's boastful threat, but it had two unexpected sequels. First that sea-bully fell back from the rail, and the blood left his face, and his heavy jaw sank.

"Strange?" he echoed me in a thick mumble. He recovered himself and glared again. "Why, you young ——"

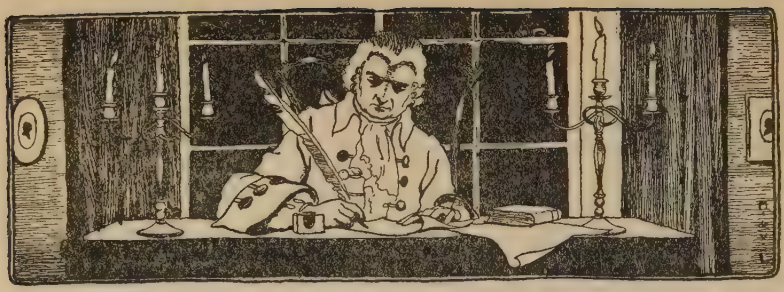
But he got no further with that, for, next, the door of the round-house opened, and the other man sidled out. He came so pat upon my words that I involuntarily stayed my flight.

"Who talks of Provincial Assemblyman Wigglesworth?" he asked.

At this near sight of the skipper's skinny companion, I found him as unprepossessing as it is possible to imagine. He walked, or rather shambled, with a stoop, so that it was hard to judge his natural height. He wore the decent black of a merchant and had a wide hat pulled low on his narrow forehead, but it could not hide his

face. That was narrow also, and long and very swarthy. Narrow and long was his nose and his thin mouth, too, which last had tightened in a cold mistrust, and he chewed ever at a cud of tobacco that would not bulge his dark cheek. Yet the ugliest feature of his whole ugly face unpleasantly reminded me of a somewhat similar feature in that of one of the most malevolent creatures I had ever known—a creature that was for a time my personal devil in Pennsylvania.[1] I refer to one of this questioner's eyes; for, while its mate squinted narrowly at me, this one—a glittering and prominent thing—stared fixedly far above my head, as if it repeated to some attendant spirit all that the other orb observed, and chuckled evilly thereat.

[1] Little Jacob. See "The Ranger of the Susquehannock."



CHAPTER VI

MY INQUISITIVE PASSENGER

I WAS out of reach, and so I said boldly:

"It was I spoke of Mr. Wigglesworth. I lodge with him over each Sunday."

"Lodge with him?" The one eye grew yet more cautious.

I nodded. The captain growled something beneath his breath, but a hand of the man from the round-house brushed this aside.

"Nathaniel Wigglesworth?"

"That same."

For one moment Queer-Eye regarded me so narrowly that you might have thought he was recognizing me as someone seen somewhere before. Then his entire expression shifted, and his thin lips made themselves into a sickish smile. "Why, now, young gentleman, can it

be you're a *protégé* of my friend, the respected Assemblyman? But this is indeed good fortune!" He held out a thin palm toward me and spat with nice precision close above my head. "Come aboard, sir, and soon we shall go ashore together. I was this moment preparing to wait upon Mr. Wigglesworth and ask if he wouldn't house me for a time."

You may well suppose that here was a setback for Nicholas Rowntree! I might not like this person's face, but how could he falsely claim an acquaintanceship that was so readily tested? Still, I was no fonder of the skipper's countenance and ordered myself accordingly. Now I had no desire whatever of boarding that commander's brigantine or coming anywhere else within grasp of his arm.

"If you're going to Boston, Mr. ——"

"Van Veen," supplied Queer-Eye. "I am Hendrick Van Veen, young sir—a merchant's clerk of New York, whose employer has regular business dealings with Mr. Wigglesworth, and whose own visits here have put him on friendly terms with the Assemblyman. Dutch by descent"—he spoke excellent English—"but, I trust, as good a citizen of these colonies as any born of British blood."

"If you're going into Boston," I continued, "and will lend me an oar, I'll be glad to pull you there; but I won't come aboard, thank you"—and I told him why.

From the round-house he had heard me mention the Assemblyman, yet it appeared he had failed to hear the preceding wrangle. He wheeled upon his skipper.

"How's this, Captain Roberts?" he inquired brusquely and pronouncing that good Scottish name as if it were spelled "Rau-baer."

The fellow Roberts shrugged his shoulders. "The lad was impudent," said he.

"Not until you had been!" I protested.

"He hinted that there was something not in order with my ship."

Never mind his ship: about this answer there was that which would have set me again to wondering over the relative situations of these men, had not Van Veen's quick reply gone far toward an explanation.

"Why, now," he laughed as heartily as, with such a mouth, he could, "if that be so, then I'm responsible, since"—said he to me—"I represent the owner and am come by land to see her cargo of Virginia tobacco safe into the town." Wherewith he nodded at me knowingly, while his sick eye laughed to vacancy.

I knew such nods: they meant that a little smuggling might be included with legitimate trading where they were concerned, and many an otherwise honest man thus then evaded the harsh exactions of the German king of England. Again was I taken aback, while Van Veen pursued to Roberts:

"Tut-tut! It all shows that the young gentleman possesses observation and you devotion to your employer's interest. Tell him so, Captain—tell him."

Perhaps the skipper did: he muttered something or other out of unwilling lips. And as I framed a response scarce less gracious, our treaty-maker broke in on me:

"Come, come, now: let's have no more hard words about it. Perhaps, after all, there's not time for you to visit us, sir"—he addressed me now as he might a full-grown man, and that I appreciated—"for the afternoon latens; but here's better than one oar: here's a pair of our own, if you'll take a gift from a suspected quarter." He spat more tobacco-juice and laughed the louder. "And here's my scant luggage all ready. So scull up and shake hands with brave Captain Roberts, and then be as good as your word, and row me ashore. We'll go to Mr. Wigglesworth's together."

Well, and we did! I touched the skipper's hard hand,

and he touched mine and lowered the oars and the pack into my boat, and, Van Veen having followed these with the agility more to be expected in a sailor than a factor's clerk, I pulled away. But a couple of matters befell *en route* that I had better here mention: the day was soon to come when I should all too clearly remember them.

Doubtless the collapse of my expedition and my suspicions of the *Spuyten Duyvil* had depressed me, for I would have rowed in silence, and my thoughts began tardily to occupy themselves with the precarious condition both of my neglected studies at Harvard College and my poor father's finances in Pennsylvania. I was just plunged in this gloom when Van Veen's better eye peeped around his long nose, and says he:

"How goes now Governor Shirley's hobby to drive all the French out of the New World, and what does his Assembly say to it?"

At most times I suppose I would have answered him with as much as I could recollect of what Mr. Wigglesworth had lately let fall. Howbeit, I was momentarily disgusted with these affairs and in no mind for the gossip of politics, nor could I bring myself to take kindly to the appearance of my questioner. So:

"As to Governor Shirley," says I, " I know nothing, and as to his Assembly, why of that your friend the Assemblyman can best inform you."

He took my rudeness with something that was almost servility. " But," he said, " as a good colonial, I do think we may some day need the French."

" Our quarrel with England," replied I, laying the harder to my oars, " is a family quarrel. Any one should know that."

Now, I was wearing the same jacket that I had worn on my adventure into the Connecticut Valley, and those pieces of bark which the dying Sachem gave me lay still —thanks to Hi Cobb's success in belittling them—in its breast-pocket. So it happened, when we were come ashore (perhaps because my rowing had worked them loose) they fell to the ground while I stooped to secure the boat and spoke over-shoulder to its owner, arranging for the return of the fresh oars—I could not accept them as a gift—to the *Spuyten Duyvil* and indemnification for that oar which was missing.

At once, Van Veen pounced upon the Sachem's legacy. I saw his greedy fingers fasten, and, running my eyes up to his face, I saw enter on that a look wholly inexplicable.

"Where did you come by these?" he asked, and hurriedly added: "And what are they?"

It might have seemed an inquiry inoffensive enough, the more so as he had had but that sole glance at the articles before my rising forced him to look at me. Nevertheless, I was wearied and disappointed; forgetting all my manners, I snatched the trifles away from him and returned them to my pocket.

"They are going to be decorations for my rooms in Indian House at Harvard College," said I with instant decision.

Van Veen was too swarthy to blush, but I declare that his nose appeared positively to droop still lower over his long upper lip. Instead of showing a natural resentment at my action, he repeated the sickish smile that he had given me from aboard the brigantine.

"Tut-tut," said he. "I'd no intent to intrude, but we New York folk are of an inquisitive cast. I crave your pardon—and now let's to friend Wigglesworth."

For the rest of our journey, he made no further reference to the Sachem's legacy, yet I fancied I could feel his stony eye fixed on my pocket all the way home.

CHAPTER VII

"HURRY!"

MY absurd misadventure with the strange *Spuyten Duyvil* occurred of a Saturday afternoon. On the Monday morning following, as I lay groaning under the necessity of a return to Cambridge and my studies, my bedroom door shot open, and Charity Wigglesworth, the Councilor's gaunt wife, all but fell after it.

"Have you heard the news?" she asked.

Clearly, I could have heard nothing, for I had gone to bed betimes after a long sermon at the Old South Meeting House, which I was compelled to attend; yet all this Mistress Wigglesworth's excitement drove out of her memory. Her usually pallid cheeks were rosy as a girl's; her heavy jaw trembled with the weight of its words, and her prim cap, which I had never before

seen one degree askew, was pushed rakishly over her left ear.

"What news?" said I, flinging aside the covers, but offering my toes gingerly to the bare boards of the floor.

"They have done it at last, those mad Frenchmen!" she gulped. "Abiathar Rowbottom's smack, the *Holderness,* limped into port at midnight—the sole survivor of the half-dozen that put out with her to fish off the banks. All the rest were either sunk or captured by a privateer from Louisburg. Half the town is saying that now we *must* join the war, and Nathaniel has been summoned to an extraordinary session of His Excellency's Assembly!"

You may be sure I didn't heed the cold boards after that. I jumped into my clothes and made for the street to confirm her tidings and pick up any other gossip possible. Van Veen was entering the house as I ran out.

"Is it true?" I flung at him.

"Belike," he leered, and shuffled past me.

He seemed to have turned out to be that which he had described himself. When we came from the harbor on the Saturday, we lighted upon one of Mr. Wigglesworth's family prayer-meetings, but as soon as that was over, the Assemblyman greeted Van Veen as an ac-

quaintance of sorts and—for the Wigglesworths were thrifty folk—took him in as a lodger for the term of his Boston business. He was unobtrusive, but he stuck close to good Nathaniel—and he fell asleep in church. I was quite ready not to detain him, for I wanted to speed to the water-front.

Sure enough, there was the *Holderness* with a ragged hole in her bow, which the chattering crowd on the wharf said was from a cannon-shot. Even while I gaped and listened, her flushed master left her, one arm in a sling, and set off into town with Abiathar Rowbottom, her owner, looking mighty solemn.

"They are going to lay their complaint before Governor Shirley's Council," said somebody.

"The Council," said another, "has been in secret session since dawn."

And all about me I heard again and again a name that I am not likely ever to forget: Louisburg.

Little had I known of it, save that it was the capital of the wild and lonely French island of Cape Breton, that "long wharf of Canada," where Cabot was reported to have made his first land in 1498. In a general way, I understood that it was a cod-fishing centre and that considerable contraband trade was carried on thence

with us and the other English colonies southward, in wines and brandy; but now it appeared it had a strategic value and must be a point of vast importance in the event of our taking part in King George's War. Round about me, ominous phrases were bandied:

"Duquesne commands it. For a quarter-century the French have been fortifying it . . ."

"'Tis second only to Quebec . . ."

"Indeed, Quebec's now second to her. She mounts a hundred and fifty heavy guns . . ."

"The key to France's power in America . . ."

"Their American Dunkirk . . ."

One tarry fellow got an admiring audience by saying he had often sailed to Louisburg. He proved a tremendous wiseacre upon strategy, and pointed out that the fortress commanded the navigation of the St. Lawrence. It would have to be taken if France was to be whipped on this side of the Atlantic—and it was impregnable.

But ought we to join the war? On that the crowd was of two minds, violently opposed, this faction urging that the Colonies owed England no support and were less like to be further oppressed by her the busier she was kept by her Gallic enemy, while the other party, yield-

ing nothing to their rivals in the way of colonial patriotism, cited the shot-hole in the *Holderness,* and the capture and sinking of her sister smacks, as an insult to the Colonies themselves that must be met with reprisals.

Rumor born right there in Boston harbor set them by the ears: a New Jersey expedition had been these three weeks outfitting—a French force was invading New Hampshire—English ill-treatment of the red men was bearing its second crop; Indian runners were passing swiftly and mysteriously from tribe to tribe, and, as far away as the junction of the Anglaize and Maumee rivers, a young chief named Pontiac, son of an Ottawa father and an Ojibwa mother, was effecting a confederation to assist our natural enemy.

I know not how long I might have lingered there, gorging on such talk and precise and false details of the privateer's unprovoked attack against our fishing-boats. Certain it is I would have liked to remain all day; but some loiterer with a grain of sense left in him announced that this was no longer the scene of action, since the issue of peace or war lay with the Assembly, which sate behind closed doors and was not anyways likely to reach a decision upon so vital a matter until after more sessions than the present. Somehow, this stung me to a

realization that I was truant from my studies, so I regretfully turned my back on the water and trudged the whole way to Cambridge, where I arrived, an unappreciated Ulysses, too late for the day's appointed lesson —which I had not learned—in Homer's " Odyssey."

" So you must make it up to-morrow morning," cautioned near-sighted Master Prescott, who was our instructor in the classics, as I donned a sad face for him at Massachusetts Hall.

I agreed for that I had to, but the turmoil of Boston was hot in my veins, and it was hours before I could dispose myself to study. I mind me that I fiddled about my room and hung up the Sachem's bark before my desk and took pains with many rearrangements, having ever a nice taste in such things, before it became possible to settle to scholastic tasks, and then, curled up on my bed, progress was of the slowest.

The early afternoon was sultry, and minute by minute the weather thickened until, along about three o'clock, there came up a gale out of the northeast, which raged for hours. I, however, was very comfortable. The season was getting on for late, and I indulged myself in a fire of pine-knots in the shallow chimney-place, looking more often at those flickering flames than at

the famous text upon my pillow. I remember how my thoughts kept running off from the printed page to the picture of the shot-torn *Holderness*. Now I would confuse the cave of Polyphemus with Governor Shirley's Assembly Hall, and again the Greek letters swam into English and became a declaration of war. Within an hour, I was sound asleep.

When I woke, it was to a strange sight. My bed stood over against the window, with the fireplace to the right and my desk close by, so that from where I lay I commanded a full view of them. Darkness had fallen early, for, though your southwesterly storm drops with the day, your northeaster regards no limitations of time: clouds had doubtless long since made a mock of twilight; the rain beat with loud rattlings against my small, square window-panes, and inky night rode on every drop of it. Still, the fire burnt bravely and lent a fitful illumination to the unlocked room—and there, peering up at those pieces of bark which I had so lately nailed to the wall, stood the unmistakable figure of dark Hendrick Van Veen!

He was dripping wet, so that a puddle formed on the floor around him. His scrawny neck was stretched to its uttermost; his nimble hands were extended, each

finger twitching covetously. In the flicker of the flames, I could observe his mouth open and shut like that of a thirsty man, and his cold eye rolled to the rafters, while the other searched those trifling decorations. There was about him the atmosphere of one just that instant arrived, but there was also the air of one unconsciously absorbed.

He was never a pretty creature, and he had entered, it seemed, without warning: I own to a start. Still, young I was, but not quite callow and, if my voice did sound small in its throat, at least I accosted him.

"How now?" said I.

He jumped as if I had struck him. I thought his face went green, but he looked down his long nose and smiled as one might that has eaten a bad egg and is too polite to tell one's host about it. He gave his back directly to the Sachem's bark.

"Tut-tut!" he said. "I knocked, and there was no answer, so I made bold to enter, and I did not see you there."

He was so cringing that he gave me courage. "I won't gainsay you," I told him, getting up and coming forward, "but I see you've found that wherewith to entertain yourself."

I nodded at the bark, but he either did not heed me or chose to pretend so:

"Yes, these be pleasant quarters and far better than we had at Leyden."

For all his subservience, he was quite his own master, and I still felt a sneaking fondness for his way of treating me like his equal in age—the which I now bid my grandchildren ever to beware of in their elders—but I recalled he had given me to understand that he was born in these Colonies, and I wondered if he had indeed been sent abroad to Leyden in the Low Countries for his education. Nevertheless, with a good manner of a person on urgent business, he was the while continuing —and I caught on his breath the odor of strong waters recently consumed:

"But we can talk pleasantries at some more auspicious time. Now I bear a message of hurry. The Provincial Assembly has risen for the night, and Mr. Wigglesworth wants immediately to see you."

"Me?" I echoed.

Van Veen's upper optic consulted the ceiling. "Aye. Common report runs on an Indian rising in favor of the French, and it is understood you lately came upon some sort of red man's message in the Valley of the Con-

necticut ——" And here, frankly enough, he waved a skinny hand toward the Sachem's bark.

Now, I had scrupulously kept silence about those strips, and so could not guess how—unless Hiram Cobb had talked—the Assemblyman got wind of them. Messages, I had Hi's word for it that they were not—yet who was he to judge them? I felt a swelling importance.

"Why," said I, "Mr. Wigglesworth must indeed mean those pieces of birch-bark."

He eyed them again. "Belike. Let me ——"

He stretched out greedy fingers, but if I did possess something worth while in the affairs of the Colony, I proposed to keep the credit of it. I pulled the strips down and stowed them once more in my coat:

"So Assemblyman Wigglesworth wants to see these?"

"He does indeed."

"Then I shall bear them to him at once."

I can't honestly say that Van Veen evinced disappointment, but I believe now that he felt it. He only folded his hands and spat tobacco-juice into the fire, where it sputtered.

"It's a bad night," he suggested, "and *I've* already

braved it." He shook more water from him. "Why not let me ——"

"No, thanks," I interrupted.

I had regard solely to my own credit: our glances met sharply. For an instant he considered.

"Ah, well," he then acquiesced, with a nod to his own thoughts; "perhaps you are right, for I have affairs of my own here in Cambridge about a part of the *Spuyten Duyvil's* cargo. Your way would be the quicker, and Mr. Wigglesworth did urge hurry. You had, then, best start immediately."

Upon which very word, this astounding personage bowed and shambled from the room!

I had never seen anybody quite like him (I pray God I never may again!), but I must admit that I entertained no doubt of the authenticity of his present mission. The mere desire to play some part in the big events that had filled my mind was of itself enough to convince me: within five minutes, all preparations were completed for the lonely walk destined to take me yet another stage—and now a violent one—into these mysteries. Had I guessed what the first two miles of darkness would bring me, I might have been less ready to run into it.

CHAPTER VIII

DEATH-GRIPS IN THE DARK

NO sooner was the stairfoot reached than I realized something of the hardships in the task I had so impulsively undertaken, for the wind whined under the door like a dog that, running a fox to earth, is temporarily baulked of its kill; and, when the latch was lifted, the oaken portal flew back as if such a dog were leaping on its prey. Gasping, I fell against the wall.

Then I looked out—or tried to, for, though there was enough to be felt, there was little that could be seen.

It was a terrible night, pitch dark, and the rain already bitter upon my face. I had half a heart to procrastinate, but the way was familiar to me, I wore a cloak which should lend some protection, and there burned within me, defying wet, that ambition to cut a

figure of consequence among the councils of the Province. As best I could, I plunged forward and beat an unsteady course across the little college-town. For not the first time I wished that I had brought my old Pennsylvania stallion " Success " to Harvard with me.

" This is a late journey," I choked, for I felt the sudden need to hear human speech, even though only my own.

It was perhaps ten o'clock. Not a soul was visibly abroad. For me, there had always been something more terrifying in a collection of sealed houses than is to be found in any wilderness, and Cambridge on this night could well have been a deserted burying-ground. Every window was fast shuttered, the streets surrendered to the storm. Then as I swung into the flats, the gale's full fury took free vent upon me.

Bad as it had been, the tempest now became ten times worse. Through a staggering darkness, where solely my woodcraft and knowledge of the route saved me from blundering astray, the rain flogged with its angry thongs, the wind charged like cavalry. My breath was torn from my throat; my hat took life and fright and leaped Heaven knows where. My cloak turned into more of an encumbrance than a shield; soaked and

heavy, it twined itself about my legs until I could have sworn that it toiled to trip me, and I pulled it off and sent it billowing after my headpiece. The slowest progress was possible merely by bending near double and taking thought of every pace.

And here I had a queer sensation: namely, that I was not any more alone. I thought that someone—someone sinister—followed close upon my heels.

At first, I laughed at the idea.

"As if anybody but I would be dunce enough to venture out on such a night!" I thought—for speaking was impossible.

But the thought did not help me.

"I won't turn around," I continued—but the impulse to turn grew stronger and stronger.

This was no peaceful way. It had a bad name in the countryside. Official Cambridge considered the Charles River Flats as beyond her province, and of course to the Boston watch they were a foreign and unexplored country. A year since, so I had heard, a man was murdered here, and within the month a pedlar was robbed of his pack and beaten into insensibility.

"Yet what thief would expect wayfarers in this storm?" I argued.

Head down and teeth clenched, I pressed forward; but with each step that uncanny sense of being dogged increased. My back tingled, dreading the thrust of a knife between its shoulder-blades. The wind roared, the rain lashed me, and still I felt increasingly a presence in the dark.

This soon exceeded the bounds of human endurance. Despite all my resolutions, I wheeled in my tracks.

Nothing!

The ebon night closed round me like the walls of a narrow cell. How could I have expected to see any pursuer? Literally, I could not—for then and there I tried it—see my hand twenty inches before my face.

But, back of that, was there indeed nothing?

" I set my voice against the shrieks of the storm.

" Who's there? " I yelled.

Only the storm yelled answer.

Now, I am ashamed to confess this panic, but it is my fixed purpose to tell the truth in these pages, and the truth is that, though proven a brave enough lad, and on some occasions even a rash one, sheer fright at that instant laid hold on me. Unable to run against the gale, I butted—that is the only word for it—jumped and butted like a young infuriated bull in the opposite di-

rection—butted sightlessly, yet with my whole force and weight, a yard or so into the suspected murk.

And I struck something!

I had vaulted through the air. Now my head crashed into somebody—crashed into a man amidriff—and, lo, we were fallen, locked together, in the mud, my arms around his middle, one of his hands tugging at my hair, and the other straining against my stiffly lowered jaw—to force a way toward cutting off my breath!

Certitude drives fear out. I now knew instinctively that this encounter was no result of each of us mistaking his opponent's intentions: the invisible man had followed me for some malevolent purpose, and here I must fight him for my life.

A blow stung my left ear; but for the scanty leverage afforded by its propellor's position (since I was the top of the pair of us) it must have sent me senseless. I tore my hands from under the unknown's body and, in an endeavor to divert him from my windpipe, hit out at his close, yet indistinguishable, face.

Unless you have some day to do the same sort of battle (which God forbid!), you can never appreciate the desperation of this one—and here the forces of nature intensified our hostility to the last degree. So deep

was the night that neither of us might see the other as more than a black shape of rage; if either cried for mercy, his enemy—so deafening was the wind—could scarce have heard his plea. As if we were half-blinded beasts, we struggled; to the howlings of the gale, we struggled in a voiceless death-grip.

My fist had failed to reach the blur of his face, but must have landed on his chest, for it found some bony lodging, and his breath poured out at me, heavy with tobacco. Momentarily, my manœuvre was successful: he retorted by clawing at my face. I felt the sharp bite of his nails along my nose; but then a hand got my hair again while its mate trailed over my chin and down toward its former position.

His manifest purpose was to strangle me! I pulled back, but he had me fast. I sunk my jaw again and gripped the fatally questing hand, but it might have been a guerrilla's, so strong it was, and, do what I would, it worked inexorably downwards, while his legs, twined about mine, kept my lower limbs captive.

Terrorized I was not, but I was frightfully enraged. I tugged at the skinny fingers of my mute murderer, straining to bend them back and tear them away. In vain: I thought they must be made of steel.

They closed.—Have you ever endured even partial strangulation?

I tried to cry out. My throat was being crushed; my lungs were like to explode; my brain reeled. Lurid flashes cut the night. I gave myself up for lost and said, in my swirling thoughts, the sentence of prayer which was taught me to guard for that moment when body and spirit should part company. Anger itself deserted me.

But in a battle royal, if your cause be just, it is as much your duty to fight to the last breath as it is to pray, and here—although, to be sure, breath I now had none—here, I say, was shown again what I have so often seen demonstrated: that Providence is ever set to favor the right, and that the right should never quite despair. Many falsely so-called men-of-the-world scoff idly at miracles. It is an easy thing to do, and yet this very world upon their close acquaintance with which they pride themselves is all composed of miracle. It peeps at us out of each tree-top, salutes us when we wake with the risen sun and at evening closes our eyes in sleep; securely counting on it, we order our daily existence thereby. Less often, but quite as demonstrably, does there intervene the miracle unexpected—and so did

Heaven help me now. I have no other explanation for it.

Approach I had heard none. The buffeting of the elements would have extinguished its noise at two yards' distance, and at one yard the blood, stopped in my ears by that clutch both dumb and ruthless, would have stopped it in turn. Yet, thus unheralded, a living thing —a creature of the night—flew by my bursting face and struck him who was slaying me.

A living thing! Wet—hairy—fierce!

What it was I could not see, nor did I care; but now, between my chin and my enemy's wrists, came (audible there) a low growl. Jaws snapped: they snapped at the fatal forearms that held me.

A yell—that of my attacker! His fingers relaxed ever so slightly; his legs greatly loosed their hold on mine to kick the empty air.

Here was my moment. Looking backward, it seems as if the act was directed without knowledge of what I was about, although act I surely did with absolute precision. Be that as it may, I raised the liberated lower half of my tortured body and, putting forth the last remaining ounce of my all but extinct strength, shot a homicidal knee into the pit of the stomach under me.

Never was attack better aimed. Before I realized what was done, a veritably elegiac puff issued out of him. Then—for those fatal fingers here immediately and completely released my throat—I dropped over, panting. I heard another growl—another snap—and the night-hidden assassin lay as still as death. . . .

What I have next to record is scarce to my credit. In brief, it is this: as soon as I had recaptured sufficient breath to move, I ran from that spot. You are to recollect my years! I stopped for no examination of either my deliverer or of him from whom I was delivered: I sped, against the at last diminishing storm, as a lost soul might flee through the briefly opened door of the damned. Without one touch more to my recent rival (I durst take none), I went—without one backward look, and with, indeed, no thought save to gain, as fast as might be, the populous city of Boston and the kindly door of Nathaniel Wigglesworth.

And, through the enveloping dark, something ran on beside me.

CHAPTER IX

PEACE—OR WAR?

YOU may wonder at me. *I* do—now. But there it is: having, with strange assistance, conquered, the victor ran away.

How badly sped the vanquished? None too badly the vanquisher feared—and feared to inquire.

Against just whom had the desperate game gone? He who won it made only a guess which seemed too wildly improbable to be seriously entertained—and he would not pause to verify or confute it.

What had saved me? I thought of an Angel from Heaven, but realized that angels (as far as we know) are not little and hairy folk, nor yet recorded as given to growls or bites. A wild beast? Those river-flats were a desert to man, yet I had never heard of any ferocious lower animals inhabiting them. Whatever it

was, it kept beside me, but I risked no energy to look, nor, looking, could I have seen.

I ran and ran.

However, that first wild pace was not to be maintained all the way. My life-and-death fight had of course weakened me, and whereas wings were lent my feet by the dread that ridiculously came back with the fight's termination, a reaction of both body and spirit soon set in. It was a spent lad that found and fell upon and cast loose an unsecured boat by the muddy riverside —and it was a panting dog that leaped after him.

Yes, a dog: it was to a toughened, ownerless cur that my deliverance was owing. He nestled at my heavy feet as I lay to the oars, and thrust a wet muzzle against one of my instantly rowing fists. Sorely as I wanted to put the Charles between me and its western shore, I desisted long enough to hug him, still invisible, to my breast. He kissed me: I'm not sure but that I kissed him!

It was nigh on to midnight when, we having landed safely on the Boston side of the water and resumed running, now along silent thoroughfares, our destination loomed happily before us. Little I surmised that this night's adventures were scarce half concluded, yet never,

you may wager, was knocker more lustily plied than was then that to the house of the good Assemblyman. My blows echoed clamorously down the empty street.

A long silence followed. During it, I for the first time noted the house to be quite closed up, like its neighbors, which was odd when, according to Van Veen's message, Mr. Wigglesworth had sent for me. I knocked again; and thereat an overhead shutter was pushed wide with such a noise as was plainly timidity pretending courage.

"Who be you?"

The voice followed the shutter. Looking toward its source, I espied somewhat of a female that I assumed to be Mistress Charity, and so I gave my name.

She did but grunt in reply and slam-to the casement. For a moment the dread came that she meant to shut me out entirely—and I was by no means certain that my recovered ill-wisher had not followed me. On the whole, your humble servant was in a considerable sweat of apprehension ere the loud bolts before him were withdrawn and he passed within.

"What ails the crazy lad?"

It was truly the Assemblyman's wife who asked that, and, strange as she had appeared yester morn, she was

the stranger now. Holding a sputtering candle high, she was clad solely in her shift, with a nightcap on her head—she was a fearsome sight.

First of all, I dragged in my dog (oh, he was mine now forever!). Then I banged shut and rebolted the door.

"Where's the Councilor?" I gasped.

"What do you mean," countered my amazed and amazing hostess, "by bringing that dirty cur into my clean house?"

The dog was in my arms. He was indeed dirty; in fact, that proved a mild description of him. He was the dirtiest dog ever seen—too dirty even for the fleas: a starved but sturdy scarecrow, some two-foot-six in length, of no known breed (or, rather, of a mixture of many a breed!), with bristling hair, brown under black mud, thrusting in every direction like that of a worn-out scrub-brush; but he was as clearly built for speed and fighting as any smuggler's sloop, and he had big agate eyes, first impish and then full of sad appeal.

He answered Mistress Wigglesworth before I could. He rose in my arms and suddenly licked her hard face.

"Get away!" she cried, and struck toward him, but did not try to land her blow.

He looked up at me. I could have sworn he laughed! Then he kissed her again.

"Oh, well," she said—and actually patted him. "Tatters" (I so called him from this moment) had a way with him. "After all, he's one of the Almighty's creatures," said the stern Assemblyman's stern lady. "But you'll have to clean up any mess he makes of my house; and you'll have to promise to bathe him first thing in the morning—even if the morrow *won't* be a Saturday!"

"Where's Mr. Wigglesworth?" I again inquired.

She did not at once answer, for now her attention was turned on me. Raising and lowering her candle all my length, she gave me a thorough inspection.

"You're worse than the dog. Where are *you* from?" demanded Mistress Charity.

"Cambridge," said I, and repeated my inquiry as to her husband's whereabouts.

She heeded only my appearance. "Why, drat that boy—he's wet to the skin! And the cur has clawed your nose! Where have you been and what have you been up to? No, don't stop to tell me: come into the kitchen and sit by the fire while I brew you an infusion, you young scapegrace."

Now, when Master Wigglesworth's wife forewent her curiosity, he for whom she made that sacrifice must verily be in evil case! Had mine been the best of condition, it were vain to deny her, for she was a strong-minded woman and loved to administer ill-tasting medicines of her own concoction; yet I was indeed soaking and all bemired, my bones aching and my mauled throat giving me much pain: the warmth of the quickly rebuilt kitchen-fire was grateful, no matter what she would cook for me there: Tatters lay close to it while I stroked his rebellious bristles. Still, I did conceive I had a duty to perform and so managed to put yet again my question about her husband.

" I heard you the first time," she snapped across a kettle. " Why, he's at the extraordinary night session of the Provincial Assembly, to be sure!" Her gaunt breast swelled a bit with Nathaniel's importance, but she went on: " You're wetter every time I look at you. Run up-stairs, get off your clothes, wrap yourself in a blanket and then come back here."

Said I, however, seeing yet more light upon what had lately appeared to be my improbable suspicions:

" But he did send for me? "

She looked me over quite carefully again. " Some-

thing has addled your brains," said she. "Run along. The Assemblyman has more serious matters to concern him than a feather-brained lad."

So Van Veen had lied!—Or could she be mistaken? Could the message have been dispatched without her knowledge? I had just risen to obey her, when somebody else thundered the knocker on the street-door. Tatters barked.

She ran there.

"Such a night!" she complained. "Who is it this time?" she called through the panel.

It was Mr. Wigglesworth. He brushed past her, when she had opened, and strode straight through to where we had been talking, and so stood, stretching out his hands to the kindly blaze. Me he seemed not to see at all, nor Tatters; but it was notable that, for all his restraint, his hands trembled.

"The Assembly has risen?" asked his wife. "The decision is taken?" Her voice shook. I began to think that love of medicine-giving was not the only reason for her having postponed cross-examining me as to my plight: a greater curiosity was that night hers. "What was the vote, Nathaniel?"

He did not look around at her; but from where I

stood, the fire showed his face plainly. It had ever been a stern face, but it was sterner than ever now.

"Put on some seemly clothes," said he, "and summon the household. We must to prayer."

That from the man that was wont to tell at once all he knew upon the least occasion! Mistress Charity herself was fairly beaten by his brevity. She bustled upstairs as bid, to cover her shift and to rouse the maid and the fellow-of-all-work, who—both almost as much trusted friends as old servants—composed her domestic forces, having paused for not another inquiry. I remembered that the manner of her husband's entrance had startled her out of rebolting the front-door, and would have remedied her omission but that perhaps the Councilor's need of me might be secret and that here was my chance for a quiet word with him.

Nevertheless, several minutes passed, and he still took no heed of me. I coughed—to no purpose. Then I resolved to speak up.

"Mr. Wigglesworth ——" I began hoarsely.

"Yes?" He kept his eyes for the fire.

"Here are those pieces of bark."

I held them out. Then he did vouchsafe one glance, but it was no more than that. "What do you mean?"

"Didn't you send a message to me that you wanted these?" My words choked me, for my suspicions were at the sharp edge of confirmation. "Didn't you ——"

He spoke as his wife had done:

"At this hour? Or at any? These Indian scrawls from a penny-fair? Are you taking leave of your senses?"

My answer was stopped by Mistress Charity's return. The two sleepy servants, half clad, stumbled after her, the latter of them drawing-to the kitchen door. Mr. Wigglesworth turned at last:

"The lodger? Where's Hendrick Van Veen?"

"He went out shortly after you did," explained the lady, "saying he had affairs in Cambridge, very pressing, and, despite the storm, must attend them, and be gone for the night."

"It was this Van Veen ——" I tried then to say.

The Councilor silenced me:

"No matter." He clasped his hands before him, threw back his head and shut his eyes. "Let us pray."

I was familiar with those signs. Whenever anything important had happened, or was about to happen, our good old Puritan would have his household giving thanks for it or asking Heaven's safe-guidance through

it, as the case might be. To be sure, I had never yet known him quite to drag his dependents from their beds for such laudable purpose, and so judged the present occasion especially momentous. Indeed, I could guess what it was, and rivalled my hostess herself in curiosity to learn whether the Governor's Assembly had decided upon peace or war—hoping, of course, as ignorant lads will, for a declaration of hostilities. Still, it was certain that, the moment of unusual brevity passed, we were in for a lengthy petition, and so, with a view to comfort, I, hugging my dirty dog, stole to the door, that I might, unobserved, rest my back against it: Nicholas Rowntree was not to find much comfort there!

Mr. Wigglesworth began far from the subject uppermost in his mind—that was his unfailing custom. He spoke of vanities and fribbles, boasters and wasters, as he always did. Then he informed men's Maker of humanity's angry passions—states and the pomp and rivalry of them, and how all these must pass away.

Full though I was with my personal adventures, and still aching from them, I itched with impatience, while Mistress Charity swayed back and forth in an ecstasy of suspense and did not even heed the nasty dose she had been preparing for me, as it hissed its life away and

endangered that of her pet kettle containing it, hot above the fire—she even forgot that I was still in my wet clothes, though my teeth clinked together loud enough to remind her! Tatters stirred uneasily, too, and sniffed at the door back of us.

But we were to have our news at last. The voice of our prayer-leader rose; his tone assumed a true dignity. He called Heaven to witness that the most feeble governments must defend their honor—that duty to country was next only to duty to God. It became plain whither he was tending—and then he reverently reached his climax:

". . . that Thou, O Lord of Justice, wilt aid our just cause—that Thou wilt raise up allies for us among our neighbor-colonies—that Thou wilt go before our fleet as a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night—that Thou wilt strengthen our right arm and direct our sword so that we may, without anger, but without shame, smite Duquesne and his French at their Louisburg as Joshua, the son of Nun, smote the kings of the north and Sehon king of the Amorrhites and Og the King of Basan."

"Woof!" said Tatters in high approval.

The Assembly had voted War!

CHAPTER X

THE MAN AT THE KEYHOLE

"WOW!" said Tatters.

This time it was not applause. It was a bark like a challenge. The dog twisted around and clawed at the panel behind me.

"Silence," commanded the head of the house.

Tatters whined excitedly.

"Or put that animal out," concluded the Councilor.

I clapped a hand over Tatters' mouth, but he breathed hard and struggled harder.

Now, I am sorry to say that I lent scant attention to what followed from Mr. Wigglesworth and that my wriggling charge was not the sole cause of this. It was wrong of me, but what followed dealt with the origins of the war and the grievances in dispute between the Colonies and Cape Breton, with which I deemed myself

already sufficiently familiar: to my enflamed young mind, it smacked strongly of anti-climax. Boys love war, and always will—until they have tasted its weariness, its disease and horrors, and learn that it is not a game to be lightly undertaken, but must be the last desperate resort for the defense of their country's rights: a mere lad, I wanted instant deeds and no more words, not even those further pious words of the Councilor. For a good few minutes (saving my struggles with the tremblingly squirming Tatters) all that I could see was the flying of flags—all that I heard, the roll of drums.

For a few minutes: you will observe that I heard and saw something else very presently.

Being both tired and inattentive, I was still leaning backward on my knees against the kitchen's hall-door, and my cheek rested near its keyhole. Through that came now a warm flicker of air, which struck my ear.

The dog barked sharply. The prayer went on with a frown.

Not greatly remarking the temperature of that breath, I remembered then how that Mistress Charity had failed, after her husband's return, to rebolt the street-door. This, my conclusion was, had blown open,

to the alarm of Tatters, and, with the clasped dog tugging for liberty, I rose quietly—but mighty stiffly—to repair the error.

Councilor Wigglesworth again frowned at me, but he had already once violated his principles by stopping in the midst of prayer and that he would not repeat, even for the correction of such levity as he thought me here guilty of displaying. Trying to make explanation of my purpose by signs, I tiptoed out of the room and shut the kitchen-door behind me. The first thing I then realized was that the street-door was *not* open.

A dark passage ran straight to the front of the house. Behind me droned the resumed petition, but forward somebody was sneaking along that hall.

With a cry like a human being's, Tatters jumped free and ran at him.

So Boston swarmed with spies, did it? Well, then, what I had felt was not the breath of the wind, but—and this the dog had all along known—the breath of a man listening, for the Assemblyman's vital news, at the keyhole!

Now I *would* catch my spy—and, except for Tatters' help, alone, as had been my ambition on the visit to the *Spuyten Duyvil*. This all in the flicker of an eyelash.

The war-spirit trumpeted again in my head: disregarding my sufferings and what had befallen me on the Charles River Flats, I darted painfully down the passage, after dog and fugitive.

Then the front-door opened—or reopened—frankly enough. It was torn wide, an instant before Tatters reached it. There was just light sufficient to see the fugitive cross the threshold, and to recognize him: yes, it was the alleged Dutch New Yorker, dark Hendrick Van Veen.

Tatters and I all but flew after him. The storm had now ceased, and there hung overhead a sky full of stars, but save for us, the streets were wholly empty. He had an unobstructed course along which to flee, but we had an unobstructed course for our pursuit.

It was a mad race, with him possessing a fair flying-start of us. Van Veen was used to walk in the manner of a crab—but how he could run! Better even than my canine companion! The fellow turned the first corner like a rabbit, and we turned it like a pair of coursing hounds.

Had he a hiding-place thus close at hand—was he running to cover?—No, there he was only twenty-odd yards ahead!

His feet and mine pounded on the pavement; Tatters barked again and again; but it was now that dead hour when men sleep soundest: not a window opened to the noise of our running—or, if any did, we three were sped before that event. We saw nothing of the watch; we encountered nobody.

Save when he made a turning, we kept the spy always in sight, but could not gain upon him. My mind was quite made up that it was he who had attacked me outside of Cambridge—probably, I now thought, through a mistaken belief that I had knowledge of some of Mr. Wigglesworth's Assembly-secrets and could be forced to disgorge them. Why were his tactics changed —why did he run now, whereas he fought then? Because he did not know but that I had given a silent alarm in the house and might have help following some way behind me. What *I* knew was that, if he was truly my recent personal enemy as he was now surely the Colony's, our handicaps would be equal in the matter of soreness from our bodily encounter—but he had a fleet foot, anyhow, and all that I could do was to maintain my pace.

Though the rain was over and the gale down, the streets were still wet. For a while, Van Veen turned

into every one that crossed his way; but ever he descended, if more frequently, thus gradually, in the direction of the harbor. It soon became clear that he was making for salt water.

Would there be somebody waiting for him there, with means of ultimate escape?

There was. He made another twist; yet one more, and then he headed into a narrow alleyway that led directly down to a wharf. Tatters voiced a warning. Ahead of Van Veen's running figure, I could make out a strip of water and, above the wharf-edge, the silhouetted heads and shoulders of two men, of whom one I took to be the amiable Captain Roberts: they were evidently standing up in a ready boat.

By sheer will-effort, I multiplied my energy. A shred of help came by Van Veen's slipping in the wet, and sprawling headlong, so that for a flash I thought Tatters would have him; but he was up again before the dog closed with him. Though we gained, our quarry rebounded like a rubber-ball and bounced on toward the wharf: solely in case the boat was not moored, and no time wasted in its getting-away, did it seem likely we could overhaul him at last.

I remember thinking that, if I did overhaul him,

Nicholas Rowntree, unarmed and spent and aided only by his dog, would find small chance against a creature that had already nearly proved his ability to throttle me and that now had human reënforcements to hand. I remember casting that caution from me.

I was but ten yards behind him now and made a last desperate effort.

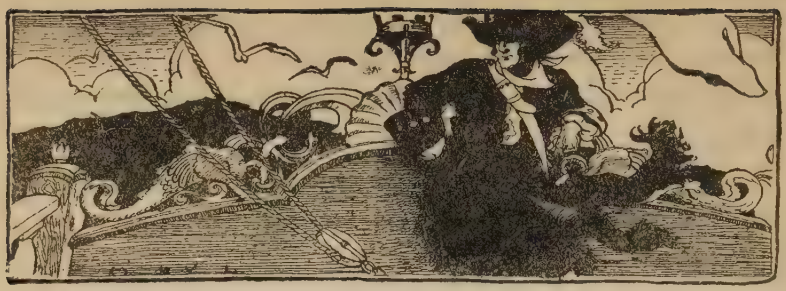
"Spy—spy!" I shouted with all my lungs, though it was bound to do no good. "In the name of the Province, turn him back: he is a spy!"

Somebody laughed. Van Veen rolled into the boat rather than stepped upon it. Its crew of two fell to their ready oars and, though I like to burst myself in a final dash to the water's edge, when I reached it a second later they were clear of the shore.

I can but suppose that good Mr. Wigglesworth and his excellent wife were in part correct concerning me that night: I must have been suffering from some sort of boyish madness, passing of course, yet certainly violent the while it endured. Anyhow, I jumped. My enemies were three-to-one if it should come to a fight, all grown men, and a pair of them already pulling hard away—but I jumped after them: without pause, without thought, I, when my feet touched the wharf-edge,

flung up my hands and dove, Tatters flying along with me.

As I came up out of the water, an unshipped oar came up, too—out of the boat—and that struck down upon my head. It knocked all consciousness out of me.



CHAPTER XI

"DEADEYE" AT LAST!

THE next thing I knew, I was lying on the wharf, and somebody agonizingly pumping at my arms and rolling me across his knee. He was bringing me back to life, and I didn't want to make the journey: it hurt too much. Still, in that he *was* trying to restore me, I knew him for a friend and not an enemy—and dripping Tatters was licking my face.

Broken words beat upon my ears:

". . . scurvy trick! By the powers, when I . . . I'll make him tip a stave or two—and if that's not Gospel, you may scuttle *me!*"

No, not a dream! I opened my heavy eyes: some faint false hint of dawn was in the air, and here, again cast for a rescuer's rôle, was our queer friend, Hi Cobb's and mine, that strange sailorman of the Connecticut.

His rags were changed to decent clothes, but, even at this hour, recognition enforced itself through his vast bulk and wide chest, and most of all through the fiery words of him. I thought that I could see his red cheeks and redder hair. Again was my life owed to Mahogany-Face.

"You saved me," I mumbled.

"Fished you out, my hearty," says he grudgingly: "those blessed swabs hadn't the stomach to haul you aboard when they saw shore-help coming; though the one that knew me didn't recognize me, that I'll swear. Still, I missed a pretty thing by it, for I missed *him*—this one time more."

Him? It came to me who was meant, but I weakly inquired: "Van Veen?"

"That name will serve him as well as another." My friend's hamlike hands mercifully desisted from their efforts, and he propped me up against a house-wall. "He's shipped on many a venture in his day, and had his pick o' different names for each of them, the swine! —But what were you doing after him, as I was? How came you along his course, in the name of wonder?"—My questioner might almost have suspected me of some evil intent!—"Because I told you there was a squirm-

ing black cove with a dead eye mixed up in yon Indian's murder?"

For the first time I connected swarthy Van Veen's stony orb with a "deadeye." Black the killer had been called, and I thought only of a negro. Well, I knew now that there is a blackness darker than the darkest skin.

"So that's he?"

"Aye—and if it isn't, you may scuttle *me*."

"My reason was other: he's a French spy."

Mahogany-Face grunted. "I know naught o' that, nor care."

"Against the Colonies and England!"

"Like enough. He might be King Lewis with a crown on his head for all that view of him touches me."

Didn't my rescuer understand? To my mind, just then, the fact that a spy had heard the Provincial Assembly's secret decision to attack Louisburg was the most important thing in the world. Being somewhat refreshed, I stood up and told what I knew of this, concluding:

"Now, *you* will tell Mr. Wigglesworth ——"

"That will I not!" Mahogany-Face drew sharply away. "Don't you mind your promise, mate?" He

was threatening! "Didn't I make it clear I wanted no truck with Boston folk?"

I winced. "But I must lay before him what information *I* have."

"Leaving me out of it—aye."

So we compromised. He made me renew my vow and then, at parting, softened a little. First he patted Tatters, more from a sense of duty, I thought, than because he fancied my friend; then he took my right hand.

"It's that I'll have no part in the defense of England, though I be English born," he said. "Never you mind why. It's for his own sweet sake and mine that I'm laying chase to your Van Veen, my hearty; and you may have this to think on, but not repeat: the last time I saw that rogue Van-What's-His-Name, he was boatswain and leader of the mutineers of the *Helicon*.—Say naught o' this, matey—naught of it."

With words thus cryptic (for the ship he named had no place in my knowledge) he bade me good-bye and rolled away up the dock. The other ship, the brigantine *Spuyten Duyvil,* whereon my interest centred, was by now, he assured me, safe out of harbor and likely bearing her news to Louisburg. The tidings of that escape

and what it might mean to the Colonies it was my business to convey to Assemblyman Wigglesworth.

He was sitting alone by the kitchen-fire when my dog and I returned. The other occupants of the house had crept back to bed; but its master thus awaited the chance of my coming, to remonstrate with me for, as he thought, sliding out of prayers upon a vain pretext. How his tune changed on hearing the truth, you can well imagine. The bark was omitted from my story as possibly involving a forbidden mention of Mahogany-Face, but there was left enough to convince him of Van Veen's treachery, and a more contrite man you never saw. Shirley had indeed bound his Assembly to silence concerning the expedition's destination, but that, of course, this particular Assemblyman, in his religious warmth, had forgotten. He trusted his wife, me and his old servants—and now himself had betrayed a trust.

"God forgive my loose tongue!" he cried, and went down on his knees for Heaven's forgiveness then and there.

Wrong it may have been to listen, but he tacitly permitted that course. His prayer made it plain that he had believed Van Veen to be indeed only a Dutch New Yorker and assumed him loyal to the Colonies,

though knowing him in business league with Cape Breton free-traders and dealing in their wares through him. Master Wigglesworth conscientiously confined himself to articles that the English government unjustly taxed us for (he explained that to the Throne on High, confidently appealing thereto from the throne of German George), but he confessed his culpable carelessness of speech and, that done, rose and declared to me that he must next make an earthly confession to Governor Shirley.

"Immediately," said he—"and you come along and tell him what you've told me."

I was wet and worn, but eager. "Only will the Governor be awake?" I asked.

"He will not have gone to bed this night," said Mr. Nathaniel, and led me briskly into the street again.

Nor was he mistaken. Not to weary you with the details of how we gained admission to His Excellency's presence at that untoward hour, or how I smuggled in Tatters, we found the Governor still closeted—a gentleman, a scholar, having the manners of one bred at court and the face of a fanatic—with three or four of his personal advisers. They sat about a round table and listened with mixed expressions while Mr. Wiggles-

worth, holding back nothing that might hurt himself and uttering no word in his own excuse, bravely described how he had laid bare the Assembly's decision before his wife and me and two old servants ("Alas," he said, "more trusty than *I* have proved to be!") and how his prayer had almost certainly been overheard by a spy.

The thing was truly serious, though not a word of reproof for the erring trader did Shirley utter or permit from others. What was done was done; here was a situation; no matter how it arose, we must meet it. He had messengers out in short time, and so, if you please, as morning broke, the whole Assembly was reconvened behind closed doors in its hall, and there, too, was the mongrel Tatters and the lad Nicholas Rowntree, the former hidden under a chair, the latter permitted to be openly present and deliver in person his grave intelligence!

My seat was beside Mr. Wigglesworth. He was sterner than ever because especially stern with his own fault.

"Who is that?" I whispered and nodded to one end of the room.

His Excellency was there, and beside him sate a com-

fortably bellied man, slightly above the middle height, who wore the costume and bore about him the atmosphere of one successfully following mercantile pursuits. His hair was sandy, his round face and double chin rather humorous than troubled (though troubled was what most others in the chamber were), but full, as my matured memory recalls it, of tact and underlying firmness. Evidently a person of parts, he nevertheless had not the general air of that assemblage.

My neighbor motioned me to silence, but a sense of my own importance had grown prodigiously within me, so that my persistence was such as he had to satisfy:

"That is William Pepperell," said he.

"And who may he be?"

"He is," said Mr. Wigglesworth, drily, "the Kittery merchant to whom has been assigned the command of our troops."

As came to me later, though I never learned the cause, Master Nathaniel had not much love for Pepperell, and it did then seem to me odd that one in his line of life should be chosen for generalship. How well qualified he was I was destined to learn. This same Pepperell, lay-Chief-Justice of the Court of Common Pleas and President of the Council of Massachusetts, deserv-

edly became a baronet, the first time that such honor was conferred by England on a colonial, though to be sure the dishonor of the Nova Scotia baronets was long before notorious, they having been sold their titles by Scotch King Jamie, who needed the money before he joined the British throne to that of Scotland and called them his " thirty-pound knights."

Well, the Governor made a general statement of what had happened. Next, Mr. Wigglesworth claimed the personal privilege of giving himself hard names, and then, after Nicholas Rowntree had gone into hot sweats and cold nervousness, His Excellency called on me. This was what I had desired: the chance to cut a public figure! From all corners of the room, every eye was turned on me, a beardless youth out of Harvard College —and that youth was frightened nigh to death!

CHAPTER XII

"DON'T TREAD ON ME!"

"SIR," said I, "and gentlemen ——"

My voice was unrecognizable and scarce reached my own ears. Tatters sneaked out and kissed one of my hands to encourage me.

"Louder!" cried one Assemblyman, and others echoed him.

It is hard to say what would have happened had not the Governor bade me take my time, and Mr. Wigglesworth, stern as he was (shall I ever forget it?) patted my arm. What with their efforts and those of my good dog, courage returned to me.

"Your Excellency," I started afresh, "and members of the Council ——"

That was better. In a moment, I was fairly launched,

and in three minutes had told them what I had previously told Master Nathaniel.

The hall flew into turmoil. When Governor Shirley restored some degree of order, one member, with a very numerous following, revived the Indian menace and declared that, in view of our plans being probably known to the enemy, the proposed expedition must not start without assistance from the only British fleet in western waters—which fleet, under Commodore Peter Warren, the speaker said, was as far away as the Island of Antigua in the West Indies. It was plain that this objector and his loud adherents wanted to recall the decision of the night before and really keep us out of the conflict altogether.

Pepperell rose. I saw then for the first time the light in his eyes that bespeaks the soldier, and, like a soldier, he talked shortly and to the point:

"We have already petitioned Commodore Warren," said he, very quiet but metallic of tone, "and confidently expect a favorable reply. Meantime, my preparations continue: my troops will be ready shortly, and, when ready, ought to start—eh!"

That, having finality, made more hubbub; it brought recruits to the peace-at-any-price party, because it

swung them face-to-face with war. A round dozen objectors secured a hearing. They enlarged on the invulnerability of Louisburg, recalled the failure of Phipps' Quebec expeditions and shouted that Britain, having first made slaves of the Colonies, wanted to drive us in chains to her battle-front to win her losing conflict for her.

Governor Shirley, who had originally suggested an attack on Louisburg and was throughout an energetic and enthusiastic supporter of the idea, then did a clever thing. He got the floor and silence for a man known to be opposed to him on many another issue. I was outshone: in 1743, young Sam Adams had created a turmoil by arguing affirmatively at my own college, in the presence of Shirley himself, the question whether " it was legitimate to resist sovereigns in time of oppression "; he was here to-night with his father and, whether or not the crisis was foreseen and this means of meeting it devised, he made the great speech of the session.

He was slim then and pale, and, being only twenty-two years old, might have been scorned by most of his hearers, though those were the days for the young. Nevertheless, the objectors were fairly caught at the

start by his anti-English reputation, and in a moment more all were held by his oratory.

He recalled the operations in South Carolina, about which some of us were quite ignorant. Louisburg impregnable? He retorted that no fortress was impregnable to right: "The gates of Hell," he quoted from his Bible, "shall not prevail against it." Exactly because Phipps had bravely failed at Quebec, it was now necessary that we strain every nerve and risk every danger to succeed even more bravely on Cape Breton.

Utterly self-forgetful, he seemed like a lad inspired. An Indian rising? Let it come! Not all of our fighting-men were needed in that far north.

"And if they were," he demanded—"if they were and went, are our fathers' children such cowards as to dread a death that their fathers faced daily? Shall we surrender at a threat? An Indian rising?" he repeated. "Let it come—and we will again avenge Deerfield!"

I write it down after many years and from a moderate memory; he said it as my pen cannot follow. His gestures were few, but they urged you to your feet; his voice rang like a clarion. Instantly, though now not as a warning to us, but as a challenge to our enemies, members began to shout:

"Yes—yes: remember Deerfield!"

Tatters echoed that sentiment and brought some opponents, if not into agreement, at least into good-humor.

Young Sam turned to the allegation that to fight France now would be to do servile warfare in England's cause.

"Newfoundland and Nova Scotia," said he, "are as yet as much our sister-colonies as New York or Pennsylvania, and they are in parlous pass as long as the Lilies of France float over Louisburg. Nor is that all: when Newfoundland and Nova Scotia shall have fallen to them, there will remain between their conquerors and our own New England only the Abenaki Indians—the perfidious Abenakis, who have already broken their sworn neutrality, not once, but a score of times."

My heart jumped at his mention of that tribe, and for one moment the Sachem's queer legacy flashed into my mind. However, there was no time to think of my own affairs. A voice called out:

"Shall we wait for Commodore Warren?"

I leaped up. "No!" I shouted.

A few of the grave councilors smiled at me. Realiz-

ing how ardor had made me ridiculously impudent, I blushed heartily and was nothing loath to let Mr. Wigglesworth pull me back to the seat that was mine only as a youngster having no vote in these proceedings. Then my confusion was covered by another voice demanding:

" Why should we fight for King George? "

Those queries brought Adams to his apogee. Waving his long arms, he reminded his hearers that he was unknown save as an enemy to the Hanoverian monarch, but that his declared enmity to King George at least entitled him to a final hearing. Why, he asked, wait the whim of Warren? Here was the moment for the colonists to learn how to act together in war without help from a crown that had no use for its western possessions except to squeeze them.

The Governor discreetly looked down at his desk. There were some sentiments it was better he should not seem to hear.

" On our side of the water," Adams thundered, " this is no longer England's war, for France has made it ours! She has wantonly attacked colonists' boats upon the open sea. I welcome that, since it furnishes us an opportunity to prepare our future solidarity by at

present attacking her. The English crown will not revenge the wrongs of the Colonies over which it tyrannizes—then let the united Colonies, by taking their own vengeance, say to both France *and* England: 'Don't tread on me!'"

He sat down.

Our revolutionary flag bearing the curled rattlesnake and that warning, "Don't Tread On Me," is now familiar to you all for the honor it won on many a battlefield. It is not within my knowledge whether some memory of Adams' speech latterly inspired the banner, but it did immediately inspire a still greater enthusiasm among those councilors. I have heard better speakers since (I have heard Patrick Henry), but I have never heard better that were so young, and few that, whatever their intrinsic merits, so affected—however briefly—their audiences. Upon me the orator had so wrought that, from his earliest words, I had no envy left against his overtopping me, and that Governor Shirley thought he had worked with like power upon the opposition was shown by the way in which the Pepperell party began to call for the taking at once of a determining vote concerning the vital questions involved.

In view of the likelihood that Louisburg would be

forewarned, should last night's decision, favoring an expedition against that fortress, be rescinded?

If not, should Pepperell's troops (after their commander judged them properly prepared, and after such reënforcements as could be got had arrived from neighboring colonies) wait upon Warren's favorable answer, supposing it then unarrived?

These were the two queries put to the Council on behalf of Governor Shirley—who was after all a fair man, according to his lights, and who, had he not been, might have tried to keep his personal advisers and Mr. Wigglesworth silent about Van Veen and so have pursued his original plan without further formal assent from the people's representatives. The vote was ordered taken.

Nothing of this sort can, however, be done with perfect celerity in a parliamentary assemblage. Opposition had been strong from the beginning; it remained considerable, and, now that the sound of Adams' voice was withdrawn, it evidently was gaining ground again. Its partisans ran about a-tiptoe, buttonholing doubtful councilors and whispering admonitions. Heads were shaken, murmurs arose. There was an added stir of excitement.

The balloting began. Tatters watched it exactly as if he understood.

And how *I* waited its determination! I had always wanted war; myself more susceptible to eloquence than grown men, I still more keenly wanted it—and if we didn't get it, who would be to blame except he that had been unable to overtake and capture black Hendrick Van Veen?

"I wonder will they decide for war?" I blurted out to Mr. Wigglesworth.

He made no reply, but I saw that he expected a close vote.

In fact, there was no denying the opposition's growth. Minute by minute it increased. Would it win—*would* it? I looked at my neighbor in sudden consternation:

"Which way will *you* vote, Mr. Wigglesworth?"

"According to my conscience," said he—and as to which way that would be he gave me no inkling.

I writhed. I stood up again, and this time cared not who saw me, or what they thought—or yet how much the sponsor for my presence there might tug at my sleeve. When would the thing end—and how?

Well, it ended before I died of it and, though the contest was indeed close, it ended in the manner that seemed

to me propitious. It was decided that the expedition start, in such colonial boats as were obtainable, as soon as mobilization had been completed. The opposition was nearly victorious—but it was beaten.

I remember cheering, to an obligato by Tatters, until my bruised throat went wholly hoarse. Why not? I felt a reflected glory in my association with Mr. Wigglesworth. Eloquent Sam Adams had done much to bring about the Assembly's decision, but Master Nathaniel did more, thought I, for there was a majority of only one vote—and he had voted as he thought right, and as I wished.

After all, the attack on Louisburg was to be a reality!

CHAPTER XIII

THE COONSKIN CAPS

HOW Governor Shirley had ever hoped in the first place to hold secret that expedition's destination until the day of departure is more than is known to me. Such plans may be cloistered by the veteran staff of an army in the field; but when they become subject of debate among civilian councilors they are bound to get abroad. Had Mr. Wigglesworth never let his tongue run away with him, somebody else would have, sooner or later; and if Van Veen had not profited thereby, why, it would only have been another French spy that did. In any case, the Provincial authorities sensibly saw that now the proper course was to take the people into their confidence and seek to make up by popular zeal for a loss most likely merely advanced by prayerful indiscretion.

Nor was their trust then misplaced. By this time most of the Colony was smarting under the sense of insult from the French; soon even those once peace-at-any-price members of the Assembly and their followers were converted by the narrow but definite decision to war and the immediate and soldierly progress of Pepperell to execute the mandate thus given him. One-third of the people had ever been favorable to espousing the Hanoverian King's cause through their loyalty to the English crown; the remaining two-thirds soon became similarly zealous through conversion to that point of view which young Adams had expressed so ably.

And week by week Pepperell's preparations pressed forward. The troops originally in his command improved under his strict training. His negotiations with neighboring colonies slowly yet surely achieved some measure of success: now one band of volunteers would arrive from afar, and now another. The word would fly to us at Cambridge:

"Connecticut has sent 560 men . . ."

"New Hampshire 300 and the sloop-of-war *Tartar* . . ."

"Three hundred more have come from Rhode Island."

You may guess how much heart most of us in college had left for our Greek and Latin. Had not Tatters proved as patriotic a Colonist as myself, I fear that even he would have been neglected instead of lodged with me and pampered by all the inmates of Indian House. Scores of our young men vowed to enlist; every day or two one or more of them did join the colors, and this with such loud enthusiasm that the very students in divinity, who comprised the great majority of our corporate body, were affected, and you heard scarce anything under the elms save talk of strategy and campaigning.

"Our own Massachusetts force numbers over 3,000," a hungry-jawed theological pupil from Salem twitted me. "Where are even fifty from the Pennsylvania that you used to brag about?"

The flush of a stupid shame lamed my explanation that my colony was too distant.

"New York has promised a park of artillery," said he—"and New York is not close by."

"Pennsylvania is still farther off," I blustered. "We'll send something. Just you wait and see. There's plenty of time."

"Poof!" said the superior theolog.

I thoroughly thrashed that future minister before the door of the new Holden Chapel.

Nevertheless, his sort of taunt increased among the other New Englanders—for there was some jealousy against me in Cambridge over my discovery of the spy—and it was hard to bear, the more so because my heart was all with the war. Partly to escape these jibes, but more to feed my military passion, I used to get Hi Cobb—who thought too greatly of me to venture such poor jests, and together we would steal into the city, gorging greedily upon its teeming martial street-gossip and seeking what sight we could find of the incoming troops. Aught appertaining to the hostilities proved meat and drink to me, who was held back from enlisting solely by the thought of what financial sacrifice my father made to keep me in college; and Hi and I even attended a chapel-service for Pepperell's troops, whereat the Rev. George Whitefield gave a none too hopeful blessing to them and suggested the motto "Nil Desperandum, Christo Duce"—"No need for despair if Christ is the leader."

"Of course *you'll* go?" asked of me Hi, admiringly.

I groaned in spirit. "Will *you?*" I countered.

"Oh—I'm different. But I'd love to.—Yes, I think maybe I will!"

Finally, I wrote a most pitiful letter home. Might I not, please, enlist? Was it not my duty? My father must see it so! Why, when the Colonies needed every young man's arms, should he continue to spend upon my poor brains that money which was so sorely required for the saving of our Pennsylvania estates?

But could my father's distant answer reach me before the expedition started?

Boston had now assumed a very belligerent appearance. There were loud soldiers strutting every street, and seamen from the expedition's fleet got farther into town than I had ever before seen sailors—swaggering fellows whom the authorities would not have tolerated abroad among quiet citizens a month or two ago, but who now were heroes to everybody they jostled at a corner.

One fateful afternoon, Hi and Tatters and I followed a party of these to the water-front. Supplies cluttered the docks to which the trail led us. Some of Pepperell's little ships rode gaily at anchor in the harbor, and lighters laden with provision-casks surrounded them. Even as we looked, in came another boat under full sail. The

shore-batteries puffed and bellowed salute, and in response, she dipped her flag—the emblem of New York.

Those sailors whom we had followed were just ahead of us. Said one of them to another:

"That's the *Stuyvesant*. She's bringing the promised artillery, and they say she has a company of Pennsylvania riflemen aboard."

After that, wild horses would not have dragged my dog and me from the dock until we had seen the landing made. Hi reminded me of a late lecture, and himself went back to college, as was right; but Nicholas Rowntree and Master Tatters, as was very wrong, remained.

The disembarkation was slow work, as military disembarkations always are and, I suppose, always will be, though I could never see why. Hours passed, yet the wharf-crowd lingered and, indeed, increased. We were rewarded near sunset when, though the guns remained aboard, the gunners marched ashore, vastly smart and stepping out like veterans behind two drums and a fife. Everybody cheered; the while I cheered, my eyes ran down the line.

Yes, there they came, with a proper gap between them and the more soldierly New Yorkers: a body of men in

column of fours. Uniform, in the strict sense, they had none (and that I was at first ashamed of, though soon I made a pride of it), for they were clad merely in the costume, with leggins and fringed jerkins, of frontier hunters—coming not from Philadelphia, but some of the inland districts—yet each man wore the Pennsylvania colors as a rosette on his coonskin cap; each had the face of your out-of-doors human, and all walked as only fellows bred to the wilderness can.

My cheering voice choked, but I flung my hat into the air. The sons of Englishmen, of Scotch-Irish and Welchmen and of Swiss from Berne and Nyon—these were fighters out of my colony: these were my own people.

My very own—for there was one among them whom I could not mistake and would never forget. Last I had known him as a stout and wheezy Indian trader; now, though still plump and puffy, he seemed to make a very competent sergeant. For all his fat, he was ever a wonderful woodsman whom, notwithstanding that I once disliked him, I had learned to admire and love, and who had taught me most of the forest-craft I knew. He was Edward Cartlidge from my little part of the Susquehanna Valley. A half-hour later, we were seated,

with Tatters on the floor between us, in a back room of the tavern where his company was quartered, and he, between whistling bars of his eternal "Lillibullero"—of which he was as fond as the Rev. Mr. Sterne's Uncle Toby (or was it that friendly servant, Trim?) then yet unborn—was telling me the news from home.

Can you wonder at the effect of all this upon me? It was, I have good reason to remember, the twenty-third of March. On the 20th instant, an express-packet had arrived from the West Indies, bearing word that Commodore Warren would not sail his fleet to our assistance without orders from London, which had not been received: Mr. Wigglesworth that day told me as much. Now Cartlidge's company-commander had but just ordered him to have his men ready to reëmbark next morning for sailing at noon: it was clear that the determined Pepperell was resolved to start at once—and no letter had come from my father to say that I might volunteer! I got a Pennsylvania cockade from my old friend and went back to Cambridge, full of a certain resolve.

Arrived at Indian House too late to carry out much of my plan that night or even go to Hi Cobb's room and tell him about it, I packed up my belongings against subsequent stowage and passed the dark hours as near

sleeplessly as a healthy lad could, telling Tatters all that lay next my heart, wherein he agreed with many a wagging of the tail: I really believe he somehow understood me and know that he wanted to go wherever my desire led. Then, with the dawn, I made a careful toilet. For its sake as a souvenir, I hung the Sachem's legacy around my neck; donned my hunting-clothes, which were a replica of the riflemen's; took flint-and-steel and tinder and a few tallow-dips (articles always on my person when any long adventure was afoot), my knife, my powder-horn and rifle and put that cockade which Cartlidge had given me into my coonskin cap. Thus garbed, I was ready, the first thing after breakfast, to sally forth with Tatters upon my mission.

CHAPTER XIV

WHY I RAN AWAY FROM COLLEGE

NOT ten yards had I proceeded when I was overtaken by Hi Cobb, who gaped at me. Before he could put me the question that flew to his lips, I put its mate to him:

"Where are you going?"

He held up the well-thumbed Euclid. "You know we have a class in this at eight o'clock. Where are *you* bound? You can't be going a-hunting."

"One kind of hunting," said I proudly. "Hi, will you put the hypothenuse of right-angled triangles behind you and come to the war with me?"

I don't know which it was his pink face showed the stronger: admiration for me (and that pleased me hugely) or regret at his own plight (and that plight I sorrowed for not least because it would deprive me of

his company). He said that his father, fearing his son might want to join the expedition, had unexpectedly arrived in Cambridge last night expressly to forbid any such adventuring.

"And have *you* got permission from *your* father?" he asked.

Now, I was a little angry at Hiram's parent for his interference and more than a little touchy on the fact that, by leaving college before receiving an answer to my letter home, I might perhaps be serving my own father ill, so it was haughtily that I snapped out the excuse wherewith I had all night been trying to salve my conscience on the latter score.

"In an affair touching the Colonies' honor," says I mighty bumptiously, "*my* father knows his son will rightly take permission for granted."

So I passed by and left my friend staring there, as red as a lobster, with tears in his eyes at my reproach, and, doubtless, in his pessimistic soul, dire forebodings concerning my fate and that of all Pepperell's men. I am sorry to record that Tatters (no better than his master and taking his cue from me) openly snarled. Many hasty words have I spoken in my life and been ashamed of most of them, but this wanton injustice to

Hiram Cobb and his honest parent ranks amongst the cruelest. It was a long day before I saw that good companion again.

False pride had interrupted to prevent disclosure of my real project, which was briefly this:

I had indeed argued that my soldier-father, himself at last too old for the wars, would give me ready leave to join our little army in its just cause; but he was far away, his word could not arrive until long after the expedition's departure, and it would be incontestably wrong to go upon the mere assumption of his consent. However, we students were always being told that the college-head represented our parents in their absence, and so my idea was to persuade that gentleman into granting me the necessary license.

It was an unfair way around my moral difficulty, but I was wild for adventure and stubbornly furthered concessions to conscience. Therein lies the key to those madcap errors which distinguish this portion of my history. It is not defensible—I trust it will not be imitated—but the truth is that, whereas patriotism helped to nerve me, the mainspring of my conduct was sheer love of hazard.

Bear this in mind throughout all that follows to the chronicle's end, and now picture me presently arrived

in that easily accessible and doughty scholar's study to whom the destinies of Harvard were then committed.

My memory is of a room lined with leathern books in high glassed cases (a folio of Hakluyt's "Divers Voyages Touching the Discovery of America" particularly caught the eye), a great globe, a tall-topped desk, and at this last named a grave man who began by looking as if he must be the gentlest—and ended by looking the most Olympian—head of his institution since its foundation in 1636. There lay a volume of Increase Mather's sermons beside him, but it was a copy of the Latin comic-poet Plautus that he put down as he listened to my request for permission to quit college and sail with General Pepperell.

"So that is your ambition?" he said mildly.

"Yes, sir," said I.

He studied me from head to foot—and at my feet saw my scrub-brush companion.

"You will take the dog?" he asked gravely.

I flushed, but nodded. Tatters growled.

"And your studies?"

"Oh, sir, they would but be suspended in my absence. I should resume them immediately on my return—and make up by hard work for the lost time."

To this he did not reply, and I hastened to fill the pause with recapitulation. Started thus, it was necessary so to proceed, for whenever it seemed to me that I should stop, he only nodded; therefore I ran on and on with my specious arguments, my desires and imagined qualifications, he saying never a word, but all the while his silence—which had at first appeared so patient and receptive—forcing me to become more and more talkative lest the gaps of it should swallow me. I racked my mind.

"A lad I am, sir, but not unused to hard knocks——"

In short, I know not what foolishness I omitted to utter, but recall mentioning truly that among my qualifications for the expedition was an ability to read time and determine direction by sun and stars (though this had failed me on one momentous occasion when Hi and I were lost!)—after which I could think of nothing more and fell of a sudden as still as he had been.

He was looking at me with the schoolmaster-smile. Him I viewed now without terror, but would not lower my eyes. At last he spoke:

"I take it that you have your father's permission to go?"

He was as precise about that as Hi Cobb and was

given, with somewhat less assurance, a modified version of the answer that had been given Hiram.

"Ah," said the scholar then. "Well, if that is all the permission that you can produce, Nicholas, why, till you can bring me one in writing, you—and the dog—had best read Homer and let others read the stars."

My throat ached as if Van Veen's fingers had again lately been making a necklace for it; but I did adventure something about his standing in *loco parentis*. Perhaps I thought a classic phrase might soften him!

"It is exactly because I stand in your father's place," said he, "that I command *you* to remain in *yours*."

And with that, passing over Plautus, he took up stern Increase Mather.

It was high time Tatters and I should go—and go we did without a moment more wasted. Our cause was lost; we must remain at college. Who can estimate our disappointment?

Petty anger pricked me to minor rebellion. This man who denied us our hearts' desire acted (it is clear enough now) as was his plain duty, though he might have done his duty with a less pedagogical gall; but his manner as much as his matter goaded my pride, and its decision was

to play truant for the morning. If we were forbidden to sail with the fleet, at least my dog and I would watch it depart, let happen what would to the whole day's academic business.

Now, I protest, my thought went then no further. Every intention of my mind was to return to Cambridge, and it was with these firmly fixed that I hastened to Boston's docks. What happened there happened without premeditation.

Any boy that can get through a forest can get through a crowd, and if ever a four-legged animal could shift for himself that animal was Tatters. Sworn at, jostled, now and then struck, I wormed my way, and he his, sometimes around folk, as often as not between a loafer's widespread legs, across the mob of people that edged the water. Everybody was gesticulating—everybody was talking at once—nobody was listening to anybody. Men fought, flags flew, mothers kissed sons good-bye, fathers wrung the hands of their boys; there was a band playing somewhere to keep up the spirits of those who had to part, and whosoever had any connection with the expedition could have more kindnesses done him than were good for him. It was into and out of a concourse thus occupied that our track was threaded, and at last

it led us both aboard the *Stuyvesant,* as comely a little ship as you could wish to see.

" But you moten't stay," puffed Sergeant Cartlidge, who had given over whistling " Lillibullero " as he welcomed me on deck with the shoulder-slap that went, with him, for a hug. " It fair wrings my heart to say good-bye to you 'fore I've half said ' Howdy '—it does that—an' we needing men so bad; but there you are, my lad "—and he looked me steady in the eye—" if you don't mean to be goin' with us, why, step ashore soon an' don't tempt the Pennsylvania contingent to tempt one of Pennsylvania's sons."

The old chap did tempt me, of course—and of course he knew it. He looked over the convoy.

" D'you ever see a finer sight? " he asked, and began to sing:

" ' Ho, broder Teague, dost hear decree?
Lilli-burlero, bullen-a-la!
Dat we shall have a new deputie?
Lilli-burlero, bullen-a-la! '

To be sure, books have to be studied and Latin learned —what a pity!

" ' *Lero, lero, lilli-burlero,*
Lero, lero, bullen-a-la! ' "

It was a song made by my Lord Wharton against the Stuart King James II's Richard Talbot, Earl of Tyrconnel, Lieutenant of Ireland, and so it was repugnant to all the Jacobite traditions of my upbringing, but, sung there and then, it stirred my blood. Ashore, the crowd was huzzahing, the flags waving, that band in full blast.

"There's Tatters ——" I doubted.

"Eh?" said Cartlidge.

"The dog," said I.

"Oh, yes: the dog. Was you offering him as a mascot? We do badly want a mascot."

"I meant," I said—"I don't know what I meant! But, oh no, where I was he'd have to be! You see, he couldn't get along without me."

The sergeant looked at Tatters, and Tatters at the sergeant. The dog wagged his tail, Cartlidge his head.

"Doesn't *seem* any too dependent," said Cartlidge.

I hardly heard. Something had come over me . . .

I vow I tried to remember it was my proper course toward my father to go back to college as I had fully meant to do. I vow I tried!

But *something* had come over me . . .

The crowd's united voice rose to a great roar, which

was answered by all the men on our ship and all the men on the other ships of the expedition, which were everywhere around us. Ashore, cannon sounded.

" That's 'Fare-ye-well,' " wheezed Cartlidge, looking at the land. " However," he said, " 'tis a dull town, though I hate to leave it for your sake, so be if you're to be there."

Aboard all the expedition's boats, bugles were blown. Tars swarmed aloft to spread sail.

Tatters caught my eye. *His* agate eye was in its impish mood. It said, " Let's ——"

I wouldn't think about *what* it said!

" Well," said Cartlidge and slapped me on the back with one hand, and with the other wrung my right. " Get over the side ——"

(My mind whispered to me:

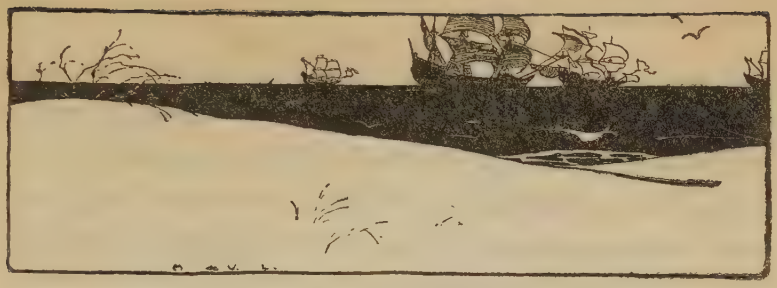
" In an affair touching the Colonies' honor, my father knows his son will rightly take permission for granted.")

"—and good-bye to you," concluded Cartlidge.

Suddenly Tatters jumped almost to my mouth and let out an excited wail of appeal. That was too much!

" Edward Cartlidge," I cried, " will you stow my dog and me away somehow till it's too late for them to put us off—will you take us—both—along? "

From which you begin to see how it was that, contrary to all my recent expectations—contrary also to my latest resolutions—I set out with General Pepperell's expedition headed for attack upon what was just then the strongest fortress in the New World.



CHAPTER XV

FEAR AFLOAT

THE old fellow had meant me to come along all the while. The Pennsylvania contingent needed men; he knew me for a fair woodsman, for my knowledge came from him; he had seen me in some tight places and realized (at whatever its worth) my share of pluck. Therefore he settled the matter in his own mind as soon as I came aboard the *Stuyvesant* that morning, only reserving this: that the decision must nominally rest with me.

Once I had declared myself, everything was easy. No need to play the stowaway, for my clothes were already those of my new company, and to all of them Cartlidge's wily tongue could explain matters. So I held myself aloof merely until the church-spires of Boston dropped below the horizon, and we were, under a fair wind, clear of the bay. Then he presented me to his Captain (now

mine!), a Mr. Baer of Lancaster, who knew my father and contented himself with a nod and no questions.

Besides our transports, our fleet consisted of only one new twenty-four-gun frigate and twelve smaller vessels, mostly sloops of from eight to twenty guns. It was the twenty-fourth of March, and we were on our way.

Although that perilous voyage began so auspiciously, its preliminary promises soon proved perfidious. Scarce were we well at sea than the skies darkened, and from then onward all weathers of the worser sort were ours.

Now a cold rain would sweep our decks like long volleys of musketry; then it would turn to tumultuous hail, and that again to a frost which silvered our spars and changed the very man at the wheel into a white ghost. A tempest roared through the rigging, lifted the waves to mountains of an ominous dun color, as if deep ocean's floor were raised by some submarine volcano, and tossed the *Stuyvesant* and her sister ships dizzily in air, or shot us down mountainous slides until it seemed we could not stop before our prows were buried in the water's dark foundations. Why not one boat was sunk then, Heaven alone can tell.

It is small wonder that these persecutions at the hand of nature changed the high spirits of our men. Most

were soon too sick to grumble, but there was not one who could speak that did not curse the day he embarked. They had voyaged pleasantly from New York to Boston, and this contrast made danger all the harder to bear. In my inexperience, I even feared a mutiny.

"Not a bit of it," said Captain Baer, when I had the effrontery to mention this. "You don't know soldiers, lad. The soldier that doesn't complain is the one that needs watching."

That truth my own experiences as an officer in our Revolution later confirmed, when my best men were the loudest growlers. *They* were veterans; these were mostly raw recruits used rather to individual conflict with beast and savage ashore, so that it seems notable they behaved no worse. What kept them in leash, however, was the sense of colonial solidarity that young Sam Adams had as much as predicted. Already we Americans are a nation, though it be but a new one; then we were a scattering of separate provinces under a foreign power—yet the feeling of union was growing, and the most violent complainer in Pepperell's expedition did appear to feel a duty to what was not here England's cause, but the common cause of those Colonies.

The untoward weather of course held us back; there

rose ugly talk about the strength of our supplies being ill calculated to bear great delays, and the worst of it was that the hurricane, which began on the ninth day out and lasted till noon of the eleventh, failed to clear the air. A fog fell so heavy that—though it oddly allowed a light breeze, which yet could not disperse it—made perilous any attempt toward hurry at the very time when hurry was important lest the French, at distant Louisburg, should still further improve their doughty fortress. So now arose a fourfold danger for our ships: of delay, of collision, of losing one another and of losing our course. How we kept in touch I am not sailor enough to know, but when fog after fog followed in dreary procession—and when, as if this was not sufficient, we began to encounter huge ice-drifts floating from the north—Pepperell gave orders for the fleet to put into lonely Canso, in Nova Scotia (where we were to have made a rendezvous with Commodore Warren, had he agreed to come), which port we made on a dark eighth of April. We had already been sixteen days at sea.

"Thank God for dry land again, anyhow!" wheezed Sergeant Cartlidge.

All of us—even impish Tatters, who had been kept

amused on shipboard by rat-catching—at first shared his sentiment; but neither he nor any of us held it long. We were waiting for better weather, and nothing is harder for troops than waiting. Besides, the discomforts of that shore were no improvement upon our trials afloat. Dry land this was not; it was all either snow or mud where we pitched our shivering tents and for miles around. Not once, asleep or awake, were we anything save wet and cold for the three weeks we remained there, and scarcely once did the fog clear enough to grant our hungry eyes a glimpse of blue sky: men perished of the chill who had survived the hurricane.

"But we've plenty to do," puffed Cartlidge.

"We've too much!" everybody else complained. "Can't Sandy"—it was so we called Pepperell—"give us one day's rest?"

Sandy knew better: idleness is the most dangerous disease for armies. He set the entire expedition to two thorough drills and one long tramp in every twenty-four hours, and, except for the severely rationed meal-times, each other minute was rigorously devoted to cartridge-making: I thought my legs would never cease to pain or my fingers stop from aching; the one thing that encouraged me for our adventure was a silly hope

that the *Spuyten Duyvil,* long as it had preceded us, might have encountered even worse times and gone to the bottom, taking Van Veen and his news of our plans along.

Nevertheless, that dismal period was a mighty part of my education, for it made a soldier of me. Friendly off duty, Cartlidge proved a merciless martinet at all other times, and he knocked me through my military instructions as roughly as if we were the veriest strangers. Indeed, I think he was so afraid of showing favoritism that he often bent in the opposite direction, and Tatters began openly to dislike him. Anyhow, my lessons were learned, and this was thanks to him.

Another acquaintance turned up during our second week at Canso. The men of one company had almost no opportunity to meet those of another, but one thick day I was sent for cartridge-paper to the quartermaster's stores, which were occupied by Massachusetts troops (it was complained, without reason, that they were the better treated), and here, failing to hear a glad bark from Tatters, I literally ran into a gigantic soldier who resented it with a sailor's admonition.

"Avast there!" he roared. "Why can't swabs the like o' you lay a straight course?—By the powers, it's

the boy from the Connecticut!" Mahogany-Face's hamlike hands were on me. "And good it is to set eyes on you again, matey!"

It would be incorrect to say that this encounter surprised me: I was too miserable for surprise, and my double rescuer seemed to have a habit of appearing in unexpected places. Still, it did strike me as odd for this seaman to be here in the uniform of a Massachusetts infantryman.

" I thought," says I, ungraciously enough, " that you would never help in the defense of England and wanted no truck with Boston folk, either."

He grinned broadly and shook his big red face at me.

" Well, I've volunteered, you see, my hearty. There's more reasons, mayhap, for going to Louisburg than to help England, though, going, I'll help her," he answered; " and there's certainty of making that port if I sail in a Boston boat, so I'll work my passage afloat if need be or pay for it by shouldering a gun ashore when we get there." His voice rang with bluff sincerity; then he gave me an enormous wink and with equally enormous precision directed a stream of tobacco-juice several yards beyond me. " But about my private affairs," he reminded me, " mum's the word."

Well, whatever else the man was, he was not a spy—nobody could believe that, least of all one that knew him for Van Veen's bitter enemy—and I twice owed him my life. Moreover, it was impossible not to admire his strength, to like his impetuosity and to be intrigued by the mystery about him. Whenever I could manage to be with him while we were at Canso, I managed it, and once he—whose comrades in the ranks, by the way, addressed him as Jenkins—saved me a drubbing at the hands of a couple of drunken soldiers, who had fallen over me by the waterside and resented my being in their way: never to be forgotten is the manner wherein Mahogany-Face grabbed one in each fist—lifted them clear of the ground—knocked their befuddled heads together, and then dragged them to the guard-house and committed them.

On the twentieth day, and in a heavier fog than usual, a general review was ordered for 11:30 in the morning. Pepperell himself was to inspect his men.

" I'm not feeling well," said I to Sergeant Cartlidge. " I think I must report on sick-call."

And I really wasn't feeling well at all! It suddenly came to me that the keen eyes of our commander must have seen me when I made myself conspicuous at that

eventful Assembly-session. He was a strict officer: if the inspection were thorough, as it was like to be, he might recognize me and, guessing that I was a runaway, haul me out and send me back to Boston by the first south-bound dispatch-boat.

" Sick? " mocked Cartlidge. " Our company's not so full that we can have any sick men on review-day. What ails you? "

I told him. He guffawed.

" It fair gravels me—the conceit of you young recruits! " he puffed. "As if old Sandy would remember you among some four or five thousand men! " Then he became the petty martinet again and brusquely ordered me to duty as usual.

There was no help for it: I had to tie up Tatters and go.

CHAPTER XVI

A DRUMHEAD COURT-MARTIAL

MANY a time since have I stood upon parade, but not often more stiffly than I did in the heavily trampled mud that dripping morning —for never since has it seemed so necessary to make myself the inconspicuous image of every one of my fellow soldiers in the front line. New as they were to such cases, my eyes stared straight ahead, aping sedulously those neighboring them; my chin was exactly level with my companion's; I held my weapon in rigid perfection. The review seemed to be consuming hours.

I heard the squash of booted feet—Pepperell and his staff advancing. Now and then they stopped for the praise of some private or the censure of another. I did not want even praise, just then: I wanted merely neglect.

Nearer.—Would they never arrive?

Nearer.—My eyes shifted ever so little.

There they were, the stout Lieutenant-General ahead, his second in command, Major-General Wolcott, the former weaver of Connecticut, and two other officers five paces in his rear. If they stopped shortly before reaching me, they were less likely to stop when they came to where I stood.

And then a most unexpected and alarming thing happened. Some of the fog, which I had hoped would envelop me, must have found its way down my throat. I had to sneeze! I tried to choke it back. I could feel the blood flush my temples: the tantalizing tickle of the oncoming sneeze continued to tease my nostrils. Not any polite dinner-table expression which might be drowned in a handkerchief, it came: it burst forth with uncontrollable vigor and suddenness, a veritable explosion of artillery. General Pepperell halted at the sound of it and regarded me. Some fatal trait recalled itself to his memory. I saw him struggle with the vague remembrance.

"Haven't I seen you before?"

The blood was still in my face. "Ye-es, sir," I assented.

"What's your name—eh?" He punctuated every phrase or two with a sharp grunt.

I gave my name. Too late I had myself in hand. I looked through him, in the military way—not at him—and so the expression of his face made no record on my mind.

"Hum. Yes. I know now. How do you come here?"

"Enlisted, sir."

"At your age—eh? Report to my headquarters immediately your company is dismissed."

So, within an hour, I was facing him as he sat alone at his camp-table: he had sent away his aide. Little good it seemed to me that the long fog outside was at last lifting.

There was no trouble to see my inquisitor's face on this occasion! That round countenance which once radiated both firmness and comfort, now shot forth the firmness alone; his eyes were hazel and keen as a sword. William Pepperell was then only approaching his fifty-first year, and looked little over thirty-eight; yet he had been successively and successfully surveyor and sailor, Indian-fighter and explorer of the wilderness, fisher-fleet-owner, shipwright, merchant and legislator. He

began his military career as a lieutenant of militia as far back as 1717, and among his civil dignities were now the Presidency of the Massachusetts Council and the Chief-Justiceship of the Court of Common Pleas for Maine.[1] Between the fingers of such a man, would not an unfledged collegian be no more than wax?

"Thought you would be a soldier—eh?" he began. He possessed a powerful gift for brevity, and when he was on the bench or in the field, his voice rang like steel.

My heart was in my boots, but I faced him as boldly as I might. "Yes, sir," said I.

"You began well—letting a spy escape."

I blushed, started to excuse myself, stammered—stopped.

"What were you doing that night in Assemblyman Wigglesworth's house—eh?"

"I often go there from college."

"You are a student at Harvard?"

"Yes, sir."

"Your own home?"

"In Pennsylvania."

"Harvard College?—Pennsylvania? Have you, a

[1] Maine was then a part of Massachusetts.—Ed.

minor, your father's permission to be here, or the Harvard authorities'—eh?"

The fat was in the fire! I made a clean breast of my running away.

He heard me with unblinking eyes piercing my heart. I had never supposed so round a face could be so stern: that farewell-interview at Cambridge was nothing to this! When I was through my poor conclusion, he raps out:

"And now, Master Rowntree, understand that this is war, not school that light lads should play schoolboy pranks in it!" He leaned across the narrow table and raised a forefinger which, for all its plumpness, was harshly admonitory. "Eh! What Captain Baer meant by not reporting your case is something he must answer to me for. You I shall deal with here and now."

He had the reputation of an arbitrary commander, I a youth's conception of rights and wrongs. I blurted out:

"If this is war, I'm entitled to a trial by court-martial!"

The shadow of a smile twitched his full lips—but it was a shadow only:

"Scarcely a case for a full court. A dispatch-boat sails for Boston at dawn to-morrow ——"

So I *was* to be sent back! I was to be sent back in shame to face that scornful scholar between his Plautus and his book of sermons—to lose Hi Cobb's admiration —to hear again the jibes of Salem theologs!

"General," I cried, "I have a woodsman's training; I can shoot straight; I've had a part in the Maryland border-war!"

One ray of the long-deferred sunshine filtered through a gap in the upper canvas of the tent and painted his sandy hair nigh as red as that of Mahogany-Face. It showed a faint glimmer of surprise in him:

"Nevertheless, you are a college-truant—no more, no less. Eh!"

"In affairs touching the Colonies' honor," I babbled, "my father's permission to serve the Colonies may be taken for granted." He burst out a-laughing, and that was worse than his severity. "Well," I hotly ended, in the realization that here was my last card, "I ran away, then, because I wanted to fight for our American Colonies—and are *you* the man to blame me for that desire?"

Whether it was this appeal to his known nature or

my previous mention of my qualifications that so acted upon him, I know not; but he did seem to waver as much as William Pepperell could. My plea might not have availed, however, had there not arrived the most welcome of interruptions. There had been, a moment since, a racket in the camp, and now the tent-flap was flung aside, and Sergeant Cartlidge, whose platoon—less me, as a member of it—had been assigned to coast-patrol duty after the review, came running in without so much as a by-your-leave.

"What's this?" demanded Pepperell. "Have you forgotten yourself, man?"

The Sergeant bethought himself and saluted:

"Beg pardon, sir; but the fog has lifted, and there are three strange ships in the bay—one small line-o'-battle and two frigates that mount about forty-four guns, flying the British colors and signalling that Commodore Warren, aboard the *Olympian,* commands them."

It was true. Warren had at length received his tardy orders from London and was here to give the expedition what help a trio of vessels could render. Not much in some circumstances, but more than we had lately hoped for!

The General's face glowed. Springing up, he seized his hat and began to buckle on his belt.

Cannily, I helped him.

"And about me, sir," I softly inquired. "May I stay? The Sergeant here has seen me fight."

Clutching that cue—for he had of course been notified of my summons—good Cartlidge began to sing my martial praises. "Sandy" Pepperell was in too high humor over the unexpected reënforcements to listen, much less deny a favor. He even forgot to grunt.

"Oh, keep the lad!" he said. "It goes against my conscience, but he seems to bring me fortune. If you vow his father would allow it ——"

"He would, sir—he would indeed," said Cartlidge.

"Then you are answerable to that parent for him, and not I. After the news you've brought, you should get any reward you asked of me."

General Sandy flung out of the tent. I essayed to run beside him; Cartlidge held me back.

"But I want to thank him," I explained.

"Let well enough alone, lest your bothering changes his mood. Any reward I wanted? You make me 'most wish I'd asked an extry ration o' beef 'stid o' your liberty. Follow to see Warren's ships if you must, but

follow at a discreet distance from General Sandy, lad—and keep out of his eye till we're safe before Louisburg, where every man'll be needed."

As Providence willed, however, I did even better. Our commander forgot few things and, remembering me later that very day, made inquiries which resulted in the statement that I knew French—a rare acquisition among our Colonial troops and one most likely to be useful in the present adventure. I was ordered to another interview at headquarters, and the long and the short of it was that, before we set sail again, Nicholas Rowntree (and his dog!) had been attached to Pepperell's staff, I as one of two interpreters, given, if you please, the brevet of cornet, though we had no cavalry —so be it a promoted private may be said to be brevetted —and Tatters as the headquarters' mascot. Cartlidge considered such a recognition of what he called my " mere knowledge "—as distinct from practical experience of soldiering—a piece of rank favoritism!

In any case, it was as a cornet that I embarked with General Sandy himself on the twenty-ninth of April. Nature was now as kind to us as she had before been unpropitious, and, having skirted an irregular coastline, broken by innumerable arms of the sea and interrupted

by mouths of unnavigable and swift-coursing hill-streams, our fleet—now numbering an hundred vessels, but all, save Warren's three, of a trivial sort—entered forbidding Chapeau Rouge Bay within sight of the frowning fortress of Louisburg and four miles below it.

Men-of-war the enemy had none to send against us, but the first thing I espied from our quarter-deck, as we followed close behind the *Olympian,* was Van Veen's so-called *Spuyten Duyvil,* lying snug and safe under the protection of Duquesne's heavy French guns. That alleged Dutchman had not gone to the ocean's bottom: the secret of our little army's destination had been no secret for this many a day!

CHAPTER XVII

MUD AND CANNON

CAPE BRETON is a rude, desolate country, foggy, heavily wooded, with here and there outcroppings of coal in certain districts, if I mistake not, which should some day be valuable—all rough hills and glens and gorges, and lowlands dotted by salt lakes: the very features of the land are melancholy. Roughly speaking, Chapeau Rouge Bay fronts east, having the stone-walled fort and town on its northern arm, and our advance was to be first from southward, with the idea of gradually complete envelopment, for which we must overcome two tremendous difficulties. To the west stretched a doleful swamp of great size; upon the northwestern heights was planted a formidable group of large cannon known as the Royal Battery: that swamp ought to be crossed by our line; those guns—

commanding our ships' nearer approach and beyond reach of our own artillery—had to be taken.

They boomed at us as we dropped anchor. Our pause came none too soon; upspouting water some fifty yards ahead told where the shots fell: Tatters wanted to dive for them.

"That is to be stopped," said Pepperell, of the big battery, as he flicked spray from a cuff-frill.

Stopped it was. While one detachment of us mere provincials rowed ashore, landed on that rocky coast out of our ships' sight, drew a sally of French and drove them back into Louisburg—while this, I say, was in progress, another body of our men executed a detour by sea and captured those dangerous guns.

So far so good, but then fortune turned. Next morning, our New York battery was landed, under fire, and attempted a bombardment of the southern walls. Failure: the stone of them was too strong.

A grimy courier delivered the news to General Sandy Pepperell in my hearing. He turned to able but birdlike Colonel Samuel Willard, of the Fourth Massachusetts Regiment, and says he in his brief way:

"Eh!—this campaign promises to be a test of endurance."

What he meant was clear. On the one hand, we had taken the preliminary tricks in the game, but must now land in force, entrench and wait; our imported supplies were scanty, and though there was a plenty of fish to be had (mackerel, herring, cod and whitefish in salt water, and some salmon and much trout reported in the rivers), our army could not long live off that barren country. On the other hand, Louisburg, forewarned by Van Veen, had had time to strengthen its previously so strong defenses; but, surrounded by wild spaces, with British territory immediately beyond, it had long depended largely upon food brought in French ships and had now probably *not* had time to lay in a store sufficient to withstand a long siege. The issue of the conflict hung on the extent of the opposing armies' food-stores.

We landed and entrenched in a heavy mist, leaving Warren's ships to patrol the sea-approaches. There were daily cannon-duels and skirmishes, seeming vital to me (whose staff-position kept him disgustedly out of them), but really unimportant. Our right flank burrowed as far north as prudence permitted; our left dug northwest-by-west until within uncomfortable proximity to that ominous swamp. And this was all.

Each foggy day's passing made it imperative to ob-

tain authentic news of the enemy's larder, but no day's passing brought that any nearer. From the French side, the only parties sent out to scout or pot-shoot were Indians, and such as we captured either would not furnish information or had no reliable information to give, whereas their superior wood skill was fatal to most of our patrols or scouts venturing into the underbrush or the forests of maple and ash, oak, beech and pine. More than this: every morning brought its toll of our sentries, stolen upon in the night and murdered and scalped.

What red men were these who could be even more stolid than most of their color under questioning, and were so craftily invincible in the horrid art of assassination? Not so much as that would they tell. Almost the only relations between our Colonies and Cape Breton had for years been those between sea-smugglers, and no sea-traffic, legitimate or other, includes Indians in its personnel. This outstretched arm of turbid land had been a closed district to us; no member of our expedition could be found who had real knowledge of the country's aborigines, yet all declared that these few red prisoners hailed from afar.

So matters stood at the end of a fortnight, and we

little better off, if not worse, than when we had been miles away at sea.

When there fell weather like the worst of midwinter's, Pepperell bethought him of hastening matters by a bombardment of the fortress from the rear. On a night of sleet, he sent Cartlidge, as our best woodsman, to reconnoitre. I was in our commander's chilly tent when the sergeant, frozen blue, returned.

"Sir," said he, "the swamp is impassable for artillery. Not oxen could drag cannon through."

Pepperell went a dull red. He knew, I suppose, that something decisive had to be done within the month.

"Eh?—*Nothing* is impassable!" he snapped.

Cartlidge's plump lips formed the noiseless question: "Then why did you send me out there?" But he knew better than to give it voice.

"I shall guide any force that you send, sir," he wheezed.

"You will, indeed!" said our commander.

Cartlidge saluted and left it. A moment later, I heard the whistled notes of "Lillibullero" defiantly mounting the frosty air outside.

"Issue a call for volunteers," Pepperell ordered.

It was done. Before noon, what seemed to me an

overplus of men, under Colonel William Vaughan, of New Hampshire, was ready to set out convoying, where very mules would be useless, the cumbersome guns. At the parting inspection, I saw Mahogany-Face amongst those volunteers.

"Please," said I to Pepperell, "this time may I ——"

"Yes," said he.

"And my dog ——"

"Colonel," said Pepperell to Vaughan, "carry this persistent boy—*and* his dog!—out of my way. Use him to send back news, when you have any." He spared a glance at the dark walls of the big swamp. "It will probably take you a week," he said. "Yes, all of a week."

It took us two—and then we were accomplishing the impossible.

We set out blithely enough and unobserved—or, if observed, it was as fools whose certain defeat could quietly be left to inexorable Nature. Last night's sleet had frozen the open ground; the wind was grumbling from the cold, and earth was dead and sky leaden. Yet the men strained with a will at the cable-tows, and Cartlidge, strolling behind Colonel Vaughan and me—

and Tatters—sang (though it might be in sardonic mood):

"Lero, lero, lilli-bulero
Lero, lero, bullen-a-la!"

Then the thick trees at the swamp's edge shut behind us like prison-doors, and we entered a fearful solitude.

Save for some narrow trails useless to our wide gun-carriages, the place was a solid wall of bush and tree, laced together and interlaced by centuries' growth of vines sometimes as thick as my thigh and at thinnest as tough as wire. One saw only the shortest distance ahead; the sole guidance was Cartlidge's recent experience—and there was no roof of stars for the knowledge of them I would use! Our course had to be hacked by an advance-guard of axmen, and then some shift at building a road of the felled trees and chopped bush must be made for every yard of advance.

Often the foggy day-dark was so deep and the mist so heavy that only our faces stood out of it, like those of bodiless beings, whereas at night we ever went on guard or to sleep with the hooting of owls and the distant diminuendo of the wolves ringing like a dirge through the thickets. There blew no wind that could penetrate

that tangle; but at first we suffered from a still cold, so as to frost to the ropes the fingers of the hauling troops; and one man, on the second night, rolled out of his blanket and was frozen.

Aye, and matters were worse when seasonable weather —with the sudden change common to these latitudes— set in elsewhere on the Cape, for here in the swamp this meant only a complete reversal of the means of torture, since now in a trice we must endure the agonies of extreme heat. The mud and ooze became intolerable. Wheels sank to their hubs in mire and had to be dug out; cables broke in pulling them. Every setting of your foot to ground meant a long effort to withdraw it from the sucking slime. We had at last to build sledges for the guns; but there were days when a hundred yards was reckoned phenomenal progress.

Campfires were forbidden and tobacco, too, during all our journey, and, let the temperature be what it might, the mosquitoes were a continuous torture: when one-half of our men ceased tugging at the cannon, they would be detailed to fan away the insects that pounced upon their successors. Accidents killed some of us, a low fever sickened or weakened others, and, despite our closest guard, though we never caught sight of an Indian, many

a dawn revealed the corpse of a Colonial lying scalped where he had slept.

And, at least just then, nothing came of it. Upon the campaign's end, the position thus gained proved a factor in the plight of Louisburg, but not before!

When we had achieved a cleared mound far east of a line at right-angles to Pepperell's trenches and planted our guns there in the rear of the fort, we thought the achievement of our design was virtually accomplished, and Cartlidge was sent wheezing back to report this to headquarters and then rejoin his own Pennsylvania company at the shore; but he had scarcely departed ere we were shelled by a French battery that had been secretly established close west of the town and on yet higher ground than ours. Colonel Vaughan dispatched a night detachment to surprise their redoubt, but its artillery was spiked ere its holders fled, and, when Seth Pomeroy, our gunsmith, had repaired their thirty cannon and trained them on Louisburg, the walls remained impervious, while our own guns that we had hauled at such cost to life and effort made no better impression on those solid defenses.

So broke the dawn of May 26th.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE CREATURES OF THE SWAMP

"CORNET ROWNTREE," said Colonel Vaughan, "you will proceed immediately to General Pepperell's headquarters and report this situation."

I was all eagerness to be of some evident use. The trail we had hewn would be plain enough to follow, and I ought to cover in some six hours what it had taken the cannon two weeks to do—the recollection of the scalped men that lay buried along that course was not now to be entertained.

"Yes, sir," said I, and saluted.

I whistled Tatters to heel. Then he and I, unaccompanied, set out to retraverse that terrible morass.

Within three minutes, sight of my recent comrades was closed to me. Within five all sound of them had

ceased. Except for the felled trees and whittled underbrush, my dog and I might have imagined ourselves in a wilderness unknown to man.

"Run along," I ordered Tatters. "Run ahead of me!"

I wanted him there to spy out any possible ambush; but he was loath to go and, once that he had started, there was the greatest difficulty in keeping him in the designed position. He would scamper back to me at short intervals and drop to the rear. It was unaccountable: he was usually obedient and always brave. Not until I quite lost my temper with him, however, did he maintain the lead, and even then he would every once in a while hesitate and look overshoulder at me.

There were few openings sufficient to show us the sky. Once we paused under a narrow patch of blue, but it turned sinister when there wheeled lazily across it a contemptuous carrion-crow that our approach had doubtless disturbed in its feeding on the offscourings of the column's recent advance. Mostly, we were overhead in shadows; the trees and underbrush hemmed us in on either hand, and the passage of the artillery had not improved the wretched path constructed for it.

We went with what caution was possible, but that was

of no great degree. The twigs and branches spread by the axmen constantly advertised our progress, which, though of course infinitely more rapid than that of the days previous, proved heavy enough in all conscience. In many places, the passage of the guns had left veritable mounds of mud and breastworks of torn timber to be climbed, and more times than one I considered turning aside and beating a fresh route through the dense vegetation to right or left of me.

An hour of hard going . . .

Two hours.

Used to the woods, I yet felt there was something even more baneful about these now than there had been when, with Vaughan's volunteers, I was going in the opposite direction. Tatters' queer conduct became intensified: I had to cast sticks at him to keep him going ahead of me.

The mosquitoes buzzed and bit. Often, pick my way how I might, my legs sank in mud half-way to the knees. Agate-eyed Tatters came slinking back again.

"Get forward!" I cried irritably.

Then there rose over me that same feeling experienced by night on the Charles River Flats: the sense of being not alone—of some malignant presence. At last

I understood my dog: he wanted to be behind me because danger lay there. Danger followed, waiting its best opportunity to strike. An enemy was on my trail.

Do not ask me why I thought this. It can but be said that I more than thought it: I *knew*. There was nothing suspicious heard; there was everything certain felt: pursuit—and pursuit that now drew very close!

I did not turn my head, for I knew that the enemy must be one of those scalping savages who had already wrought havoc upon Vaughan's command, and no Indian would track a chosen victim so closely as to be seen —until ready for the fatal rush. Besides, I feared that if I exhibited too much anxiety, Tatters might be excited into a bark which would warn our stalker of our knowledge of him. Instead (with a scarcely whispered, but tail-waggingly acknowledged admonition to quiet) I let the dog go where he listed and rigorously repelled an impulse on my own part to attempt greater hurry. In any event, such an attempt would have been fruitless, and the making of it would have betrayed to my pursuer the cognizance that I had of him as much as would any canine bark: as long as he thought me ignorant of his being there, some little advantage remained to me.

Tatters growled. Without risking a look, I knew

that his brown scrub-brush hair was erect, his tail extended, his quivering little body divided between the desire to remain close to his master and the instinct to attack.

" Come along! " I said as loudly and as unconcernedly as I could.

Directly ahead of me there appeared a short stretch of fairly good trail whereon my feet would naturally make less noise than theretofore, so that if the sounds of my advance discontinued altogether, the succeeding quiet would not be blatantly noticeable. Moreover, there was an abrupt turn in the way, cut to circumscribe a stagnant pool, and partially across this turn a felled tree had been rolled by some blow from the last passing gun-carriage.

Here was a piece of good luck to be acted upon without delay. I went lightly down the first portion of the space in question, leaped the log and immediately dropped noiselessly flat upon the ground behind it. Tatters came along close back of me. He seemed to understand; alertly he mimicked my every move.

Sure that I was close ahead, the Indian might cease to look, beyond a yard in advance of himself, for signs of my passing feet—might take his eyes from the ground

and so not at once note whether I had or had not traversed it. I would crawl rapidly from the log to the underbrush and lie there until he should appear and pass: then it would be that he could be attacked from the rear.

But this manœuvre was forestalled before I had budged another inch. The savage was much nearer than I thought, and coming on more rapidly. I had time only to lay cautioning fingers on the dog's muzzle, and to shift my head from peeping over the log's top to peeping around its more imminent end, when my pursuer appeared ten yards down the trail. Opportunity to cover him with my rifle there was none, for he would have seen and had me before I could raise myself from my awkward position. There was nothing to be done but to lie there and wait whatever the next few seconds held in store for me.

He was a lissom fellow, that Indian, stripped to the waist, and his torso bright with war-paint. His head was shaved, save for its scalp-lock, in which had been thrust a gray quill. His sharp face, with its high cheek-bones, peering eyes and hooked nose was the face of a bronze eagle.

A few loose roots at the end of the stump seemed to

protect my protruding face from his gaze, but it is to be doubted whether I could now have drawn in my head even if I had not feared the making of some slight noise in doing so: this man, stepping forward with the litheness of a deer, might, in far less than a minute more, be my murderer. Lying motionless on my side, I watched with fascination his rapid oncoming.

A splendid figure, and terrible. His mouth smiled. He moved with the certitude of a wild animal. In his belt he wore a knife and tomahawk (the latter heavier in the blade than those I had seen in Pennsylvania and more such a weapon as is used by the Crees, to the south of Hudson Bay), but what he bore in his right hand was a thoroughly European pistol—and it was cocked and primed.

Three strides he took.

An instant, next, he hesitated, as if having expected to see me here and being somewhat puzzled at my non-appearance. I remember hearing in that interval the distant rumble of cannon from what seemed the section of the sea-front on which Pepperell's right flank rested. Then the Indian, at a quick, soundless pace that was half a run, came straight on again to where I lay hid.

Tatters shivered against my side.

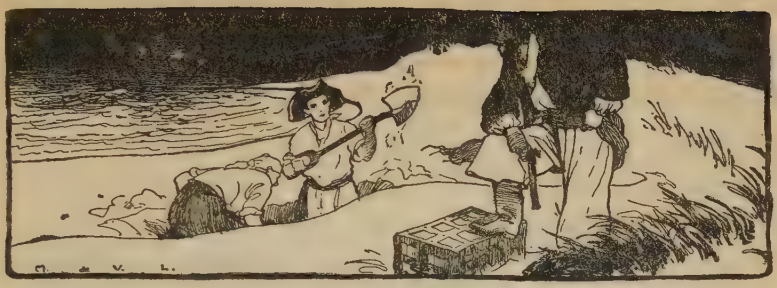
Had the red man seen me?

He had given no sign of it, and his eyes were held high. How *could* he have seen me?

Well, a shift of position had to be chanced now, whatever the result of it! Desperately hoping that my dog might not meantime surrender to some noisy excess of premature zeal, I cautiously drew in my head, turned on my back and lay ready. I would seize the Indian's foot and throw him as he stepped over the log.

Again my plans failed. I had not, after all, deceived him—but he had outwitted me by letting me suppose himself outwitted. He *had* seen me! One foot did cross the log, but it went far over, and beyond my calculations.

There, astride of me, stood the Indian—and he levelled his pistol at my face.



CHAPTER XIX

ONE LAST CHANCE

THE thing was over in a trice: for the pistol commanded *me*—it did not command Tatters!

There was an animal-cry and a dart and a powder-flash all in one. I must have raised my head to meet my death, for my left cheek was scorched by the explosion; but the dog had his teeth in that ankle of my enemy which was nearest him. Those teeth had diverted the pistol: I grabbed the Indian's right knee—and dog, boy and red man, we all rolled in the mud together.

Tatters released his lower hold and flew at the bronze throat. I struggled upward and knelt upon the wide-flung arms; then I called off my valiant ally. In the very second that it had begun, the fight was over.

The savage looked unblinking into my face close bent

to his. He grunted a single emotionless word of questioning:

"Kill?"

I shook my head.

He had used the French "*tuer,*" and it was French that he employed when he spoke again, though with the throaty note of your true Indian:

"Umph—prisoner."

Yes, I had a prisoner, and glowed with the pride of it! Having relieved him of his weapons (I have that tomahawk to this day; it is the one that hangs over the desk where I write these memoirs in the south ground-floor room of our house here in Hempfield), I procured my rifle and held it ready. Tatters stood guard.

"Get up," said I.

My captive smiled. "Cannot."

Only then did I see the full extent of what had happened. No Indian should trust himself with a pistol: no savage ever really learns to use one. Under the suddenness of Tatters' attack, this red man had lowered his hand, probably on the impulse to shoot the dog, but his muscles, occupied with an unfamiliar firearm, acted more speedily than his brain intended; a finger pressed the trigger in transit, and the ball lodged in its master's

thigh. I had indeed a prisoner, but he was one far too heavy for me to carry over such a rough trail.

There was solely one thing for it. He must be bandaged first and then trussed up and gagged and left to wait until I had delivered Vaughan's report to General Pepperell and could come out with a litter and bearers.

It was an ugly wound, but I did the best for it that might be done, for Cartlidge's wood-lessons had included a course in such rough-and-ready surgery. Considerable blood had already been lost. With water from the near-by pool, I cleaned the gaping hole: it went downward toward the knee; the bullet had seemingly lodged somewhere thereabouts, and it was clear that my prisoner could indeed not walk. Then I staunched the red flow, trusty Tatters keeping snarling jaws close to the patient's throat whenever my ministrations preoccupied me.

The pain, which must have been great, the Indian bore without flinching. Without struggle or word, he then let me use his own belt to tie his hands.

As gently as might be, I dragged him off the trail and into the underbrush, attempting to conceal all traces of our progress as soon as made. The next task was to bind him, seated on the ground, to a tree, so that he

could not crawl away, but for this no thongs were ready. I peeled off my shirt and tore it into adequate strips and with these accomplished, as it seemed, his security.

He was very weak by now, but, as I leaned over to tie the last knot, his clouding eyes fell on my bare breast. Suspended there, by a string around my neck, were, you will remember, those pieces of bark bequeathed me by the Sachem in the Connecticut Valley. The newer of them—that which the chief had written as he lay dying—happened to be hanging uppermost and face out. At sight of it, my captive's stolidity vanished; he bent forward toward it as far as ever his bonds allowed; his eyes started from his head.

"Where," he whispered in his broken French, rendered more difficult by his increasing weakness—"where get that?"

The Sachem's legacy! Without reply, I drew instinctively away from him, so that he must have read only the merest fraction of the writing. He commenced to say something about the "Yenghees," which was the Indian word for the English and which we Colonials have since adopted, in the form of "Yankees," as a name for those of us dwelling northeast of New York; but his voice failed him.

"What?" I asked.

"Can't read it—you?" he gasped.

I told him no.

At that he smiled again—wanly, but, I thought, with satisfaction. He stared at me as though I were one more shadow amid the trees. His words came slowly and painfully, but with a bitter joy:

"No Yenghee—can . . . Mic-Mac—language. Me—Mic-Mac. . . . Inside those—life-death picture-words . . . Yenghees' scalps ——"

His shaven head fell back against the tree-trunk and there lay still. He had not fainted, but either the loss of blood had done its work at last, rendering him temporarily incapable of speech, or else he decided to say no more.

With what savage rigmarole he had been trying to impress me I had little care. I durst not be over long here: I must journey on. Duty demanded my hurrying to headquarters; besides the which, my pride forbade further lingering before making announcement to Pepperell that his cornet, whom he had scorned as a "persistent boy," had a prisoner out here in the swamp. It seemed a cruel thing to gag a wounded man; but no other safe course lay open to me. I took that, and with

Tatters (as proud as myself) at my heels, resumed my interrupted pilgrimage.

It ended betimes, for the trail was better, on the whole, in what had been its earlier-made stages and very speedily we soon made our way along it. No sooner, however, had I encountered our main line's outposts than I met also bad news.

"Did you hear that firing, the morn?" inquired the sentry who first challenged me.

I got premonition from his face. It possessed all that eagerness with which people bear ill-tidings. Reluctantly I gave him the chance to tell me.

"Yes," said I. "What was it?"

He poured them out. "We launched a boat-expedition against an harbor-island battery the Frenchies had established. They must 'a' been apprised o' our coming. We lost 136 men—some says 152.—Wasn't you friend to Sergeant Cartlidge?"

My heart sank as I nodded.

"Well, he's gone to his account along o' *them.*"

"You're—you're sure?"

"Sure *and* certain. The relief as jus' come into the line here helped bring some o' their corpses ashore. Billy Bates is a corp'ral in that there company, an' *he*

knowed Ed Cartlidge, too, and seen his body with a bullet-hole right through the head o' him."

Confirmation came later, but it was not needed: even as this man spoke, I felt the truth of what he said. My big, wheezing, good-natured woodsman that had taught me so much, the strict disciplinarian that had made a soldier of me, was indeed dead. Far down the still air, I seemed to hear his jolly voice fading away:

"Lero—lero—bullen-a-la;
Lero—lero . . ."

Though (shamedly I confess it) there endured pride in my prisoner, it was with misty eyes that I went forward. They were not yet dry when admission was gained me to Pepperell's headquarters.

Now, conceal it how you try, excitement within a Council of War always spreads to the guards without. That was the present case: only the excitement then prevalent at those headquarters could account for the readiness with which I was passed along; for, though Tatters was made to wait my return in the open, I was admitted straightway and came upon our commander standing amid a group of his most trusted officers, plainly engaged upon the result of the recent disaster.

". . . and the Commodore," he was saying, with icy sarcasm, " refuses, like a good servant of the Crown, to risk English lives for Colonials by landing any of his marines—*eh!*"

General Sandy's hair was tumbled, his face crimson; but his mouth was uncommon firm, and his fingers now sought a pile of new-made maps on the table beside him —that same table across which he had scolded me at Canso—and again busied themselves angrily with a pistol-butt.

Evidently, Commodore Warren's London orders had forgot to mention possible land-duty, and now their recipient declined to exceed the letter of them in our time of need. Evidently, too, there had arisen a question of hurry, for one of the surrounding officers (Lieutenant-Colonel Chandler, I think it was) gave it as his opinion that our troops would not be sufficiently hardened for a general attack before two months or more on the siege-lines.

Unobserved in the emotions of that crisis, I could approach and observe all that followed.

Pepperell fairly leaped in his boots. Always a man of few words, he spoke not many now, but what he said were easy enough to understand:

That morning's reverse had been serious. Worse; scouts rumored indications of Indian reënforcements for the French approaching from the mainland, and every additional day made it more possible that a French fleet, summoned upon Van Veen's report of our intention, might arrive with supplies and vanquish Commodore Warren's patrol, or, anyhow, run their blockade. Our situation was rapidly becoming serious beyond all my previous belief: General Sandy declared us insufficiently provisioned for an indefinite siege; we must make a general assault just as soon as our imperfect training could be raised to anywhere near a point that justified it.

" We cannot," said he, " wait a day longer than June 19th—and as for me, *I won't!* "

"And then? " asked somebody.

" Then," says Pepperell grimly, " it will be win or lose—and if supplies reach Louisburg for the enemy before that day, it will be lose anyhow."

CHAPTER XX

I BECOME A DESERTER

FOR all my grief over Cartlidge, it seemed to me that I had a duty to perform bearing upon the present situation. This being so, I wriggled through the crowd of officers until I fronted the General and saluted.

"Sir ——" I started.

Pepperell glared at me, as if he had never seen me before.

"Get you back!" he thundered.

I know now how much the Louisburg expedition owed to this merchant-soldier's genius and courage, which, save for the devotion of his men, alone made its result possible; but just then I could feel nothing save the lash of his words. He had sent me out as a messenger: why would he not at once hear my report?

I determined not to be overridden.

"Colonel Vaughan's compliments," I essayed again, "and he orders me to say ——"

With a stunning objurgation, the commander bade me stand aside. Scarce a wave more of his hand he vouchsafed me.

"Report to Colonel Willard," said he.

In these days, as an old soldier, I see that he was right, considering both the matter which he at this moment had on hand and the position which Samuel Willard, commanding, as I have before said, the Fourth Massachusetts Regiment, held in regard to him; but then I was merely a boy at once proud and sorrow-stricken. Few lads can see that the troubles of other folk may surpass their own; it is the harder so to see if those other folk are elders. Here came I: my instructor and friend-from-home had but now been slain in battle; I had a prisoner lying out in the swamp and bore important news from one front. How could I realize that General Sandy and his staff had to argue from the death of 136 men toward the preservation of the rest of our little army, the success of our enterprise and the honor and safety of the Colonies—that they had already fruitlessly questioned scores of captives—and that news from

Vaughan's adventure must yield temporary precedence to the problem of our main body's operations?

I looked about me. Save one, all faces were turned upon the General, whose crisp declarations had become crisper orders. The Council of War (any assembly under the head of a genius of Pepperell's stamp being merely a series of dictations on the part of its commander) was going on with no more account of me than a swift river takes of a pebble dropped into it. The exception was Colonel Willard, who regarded me simply because he was told so to do.

He was a small man in a rusty uniform, with his head cocked on one side and the sharp eyes and general air of a sparrow that thinks well of itself. Too good a soldier to disobey a superior's orders, full half his whole heart was yet (as I could tell) for what was going on around the table, but none else had so much as a glance for me, and I couldn't then have escaped him had I chosen to.

He drew near the entrance. I followed him.

"Well?" says he.

It was all too clear that he wanted to rid himself of me and get back to the Council. This was right enough, but my rage was too hot to admit the propriety of it.

Resentment lent me that which then seemed inspiration.

What, after all, was it that my prisoner had been about to say concerning the figures on the bark given me by the Sachem? A savage rigmarole I had called it then, but rapid reflection gave it another color. "Life-death picture-words!" Something concerning the "Yenghees" and their scalps had been about to follow. Remembrance, too, became vivid of that unfinished message of the dying chief in the Connecticut Valley—and here again was our own sagacious Pepperell talking of Indian reënforcements to the French!

I put two and two together. Did the vast distances involved make my guess impossible? What was distance to the red men, whose messengers appeared and disappeared near and far, whose relayed runners travelled hundreds of miles, and whose secret dispatches flew, or seemed to fly, across vast wildernesses and over wide waters from hilltop to hilltop and from shore to shore?

Then and there I believed my fingers to be upon the furnace-door of a great conspiracy that, if not quenched in time, would gush out, consuming our entire expedition and, its molten metal pouring south, eventually

consume the Colonies as well. Whatever it was, my swamp-prisoner knew it—and I would make him tell. I—without any help from these high-and-mighty officers! When I returned bearing such information, we should soon hear them whistling another air to Nicholas Rowntree.

"Well, well, boy!" twittered Colonel Willard impatiently. "Talk out—talk out!"

He should know nothing of the captive until I knew all. Nay, even then, I would speak to the commander-in-chief, and the commander-in-chief alone, for then one hint would gain me Pepperell's undivided ear.

"From Colonel Vaughan, sir," said I, swallowing my wrath—and gave him Vaughan's report, and not one syllable more.

I did expect, however, that that would win me some very serious attention. On the contrary, preoccupied Willard heard it, gravely to be sure, yet for all the world as if it were a detail of the routine day's work no more important than another.

"Go outside," said he, without permitting himself any comment. "Wait there until our business here is ended. Then I shall repeat this to the General, and, if he has questions to ask, you will be sent for."

There still remained with me some morsel of curiosity regarding Pepperell's present plans. So:

"Mayn't I stay here?" says I.

Willard was already moving back toward the table. He scarce turned his sparrow-head to fling at me:

"Go outside and wait!—And when you are addressing a ranking officer, say 'Sir'!"

For that moment, it was as if, at poor Cartlidge's death, his military training of me had passed away also. The time was to come when it would all return—and remain—for my well-being; but just now I changed to the very opposite of a soldier, for I leaped at disobedience. I had no stomach for dallying! Let whoso would submit to petty tyranny; *I* would at no rate consent to remain inactive. Ere Colonel Willard had well finished what—with short weight of justice—sounded in my haughty ears as an uncivil speech, my resolution was taken to quit the camp immediately, somehow force my prisoner to speak and then get some of my friends among Vaughan's men to help me in with him.

I stalked into the open in such a heat of indignation that I was almost as short with the glad greeting of scrubby Tatters as the Colonel of the Fourth Massachusetts Regiment had been with me. I stayed not to

procure a shirt to replace the one sacrificed as bindings for my prisoner; I made straight for that portion of our line nearest the swamp.

Would the outposts pass me? If they were those who had let me in, it should be easy to convince them that I was only returning to duty under Vaughan (for we were still rather raw troops, unlearned in all of Pepperell's discipline), which done, I could brave anything. But hadn't the guard been changed? In the answer to that question seemed to lie the fate of my project.

Should I boldly go forward now? Or should I attend upon nightfall, and then make a bolt for it?

Revolving these queries, I proceeded slowly until the line waited a short fifty yards ahead.—And there I encountered Mahogany-Face!

He was taking his ease, his broad back against a rock. It was mess-time, and he sat with a loaf of bread and a lump of smoked meat on his lap and in his hand a pewter tankard of foaming ale. Even though the flaming red hair had been blown away from the place where that ear should have been, his stubborn nose, daring brown eyes, sensitive mouth and general expression of boyish enthusiasm made me feel as if he were someone of my own age, who could understand me.

"Ahoy!" said he and raised the tankard to me. "Will you share?"

I thanked him, but refused. "Is your company on duty in this part of the line?" I asked.

"Aye," he replied disgustedly.

"Manning the outposts also?"

"They are, and I wish they weren't. It's dull work for a strong man, and you may lay to that." He wiped his mouth with the back of one of his wide hands and, as I sat down excitedly beside him, inspected me. "Whereas," says he, "you look like a young blade who's had a more interesting job than waiting for what won't happen."

Before I could press my own case as it now began to develop in my mind, he was launched upon a long complaint of his enforced inactivity in this unopposed section of our front. The days were hot, the nights cold; nobody ever shot at him; worse still, nobody ever appeared at whom he could shoot. All in all, there were few spots in the world duller.

"And I, mind you," he said, "come here on private business, with no heart in King George's affairs, and not much in the Colonies' either. I should have known better, an old sailorman like me," said he, clapping a

red fist to his mahogany forehead. "I should have known 'twould be no place for a person of any spirit."

At that I wondered if there were not here a better opportunity than any I had hoped for. Looking up at him, says I:

"If you come with me where I'm going, you'll have something *real* to do!" My voice sank. "I'm going outside the lines and into the swamp."

His brown eyes fairly blazed. "Why?"

"Would you go?" I procrastinated.—"On a dare?"

"'Tis a hard thing if Jack ashore's to be forbidden all amusement! I'd leave here for sixpence, so there was a fight in it."

"There's more than that. If you'd leave for sixpence, would you leave for promotion?"

He sobered ever so little. "Promotion's naught to me in this cause, matey—but a bit of excitement is. It's fair necessary. I'm telling you I'm not accustomed to inactivity, and without a bit of battle now and again I'm like a drunkard without his dram."

Yes, I believed it was my best opportunity! "I've a prisoner tied up in the swamp," said I, "that General Sandy would give his right hand to interrogate. It's an Indian"—my throat quivered—"that's already

hinted to me about red reënforcements to the French and, later, a general rising against all the southern colonies. But he's wounded, and I can't bring him in alone—and don't want to share that honor with anybody that's not my friend. If you'll come along, of course your captain will miss you, but when you've brought in this captive with me, it won't matter how you ——"

His sincere hatred of his recently torpid existence cut me short. Man as he was in years, this giant was indeed a youth at heart.

"*If* I'll go!" he bellowed till I thought we'd have the guard on us for disorderly conduct. "*If!* Why, matey, anything for an eventful life!" He wrung my fingers so that they nearly fell off. "All hands aboard!" he cried—which is sea-lingo for "Let's start"—and he added: "I'm with you all the way, and if that isn't Gospel, you may scuttle *me.*"

Well, in the upshot, he made only one stipulation: he had a sailor's mistrust of the so-called lower animals and declared that Tatters (who all this while had stood by wagging an expectant tail) must not go along, but be left with one of Mahogany-Face's own comrades, who would be guaranteed to keep good care of him. I

pleaded in vain. The dog might betray us to scouting Indians. No? Well, then, the outposts would never pass him. They had passed him in? Then, anyhow, he (Mahogany-Face) had never yet seen good luck come along of taking a dog with you, and that was flat. Tatters might be the nominal mascot of headquarters: he was no mascot for Mahogany-Face, who wouldn't budge if Tatters did, and if this wasn't Gospel, I could scuttle *him*.

Now, I couldn't bring in the Indian alone, and, despite my original idea, Vaughan's men were pretty far off. Moreover, I had begun to depend on Mahogany-Face's accompanying me to secure a passage of the guards, who had indeed, he told me, by now been changed. Strongly as it went against my deepest feelings, I had to submit to seeing my sadly disappointed animal tied up in a trench some distance down the line. His pleading whine followed me for a good mile; the memory of his now saddened eyes accompanied me even farther.

Mahogany-Face knew his officers' habits, however, and hurried me back. Here was a time when the outposts were unsupervised. Five minutes later we were upon one of them.

" Now my hearty cock," said my friend to this soldier, after the briefest of explanations that I was merely being escorted a hundred yards on my return to Colonel Vaughan's command, " away now and break it." He gave rein to his wide wink and screwed up his nose.

The sole representative of that outpost was dubious.

" Look you here, Timothy Hanrahan," said Mahogany-Face, " I've given you a reason that'll satisfy the lieutenant, if so be you're of such a squeamish conscience as to make it necessary for you to mention this little matter to him; but now I'll just show you a better reason for yourself alone."

He stood back and slowly, with his left hamlike hand, rolled up the sleeve of his right arm. I never saw such an arm—an arm for Samson! He bent it, his immense fist clenched till its knuckles stood out like ivory on the red of his fingers:

" Matey, you've known that fist since the day we sailed for this God-forsaken island, and if you don't see reason now ——"

Timothy let us go.

He let us go, and we reached the swamp without further adventure. Without further adventure, its dark walls closed behind us, and we entered its ominous quiet.

We gained, at long last, the stagnant pool, the fallen log.

Mahogany-Face was ahead. I pointed out the underbrush through which I had dragged the wounded Indian, and my queer friend plunged into it, I following not three paces behind.

" Is this the spot? " he presently inquired.

It was as yet invisible to me, but I knew it was just there. " Yes," said I.

" Sure, matey? " He sounded puzzled.

" I am."

" Then where," asked my comrade as I came up with him—" where is your prisoner? "

CHAPTER XXI

THE MOCCASIN TRAIL

MY prisoner was gone!

The merest glance proved that. One glance more told me something of the manner of his going.

Somehow, ever since leaving him, the fear of his rescue had been banished by my enthusiasm. Confidently expecting to find him, my eyes, as we entered the thicket, had not been on the lookout for any signs of its disturbance; but wood-training makes a lad observe any new spot minutely: I had so observed this spot when, that very morning, I dragged the red man here, and now, dim as was daylight in the swamp, certain disturbances, other than my own and those of Mahogany-Face's entrance, were readily noticeable. There were the prints of two or more men's moccasined feet coming to the

tree; the underbrush was apparently undisturbed, but here were the same tracks—deeper, as if those who made them bore a burthen—going in another direction: it is a rule with your Indians not to leave a place by quite the same way they have reached it.

Hurriedly I pointed out these tokens to Mahogany-Face, whose landlore was not a match for mine. He spoke low:

"Who ever heard the like o' that? Now, can you tell if it was recent?"

I thought it was.

"Then," he whispered, eagerly grasping his rifle, "belike they're watching us this blessed minute!"

Such a supposition seemed baseless. The first aim of the rescuers, handicapped by what they carried, would be to take their companion to some place of safety.

"Three Indians," said I, "and only two of us—but one of them incapacitated: we'll follow."

That giant looked at me out of his bright brown eyes as much as to say that it would be madness to propose any other course, and that I must think him mad to imply that any other was possible. His love of danger nobody could know and not love him for. Now it impelled me to a perfect frankness.

"Look you," I said suddenly, "this thing did not begin here or to-day. It began in the Valley of the Connecticut a few minutes before you found Hiram Cobb and me there—and since you're sharing its perils, it is but fair you should know as much as I do."

In the fewest words possible, I narrated what had happened and repeated the dying Sachem's speech as exactly as I could remember it.

My friend heard me, bending farther and farther toward me as the short history proceeded. His breath came short; so infused with blood was now his face that I looked to see him stricken with a fit of apoplexy. The end of my account he brushed aside with huge hands that shook like a crying child's.

"And the bark," he hoarsely interrupted—"what did you with the bark?" I have never seen a man so altered. He gripped me and fairly shook me, while I writhed with pain. "Matey—matey—don't tell me that you lost the bark!"

Somehow I managed to free myself enough to show him both pieces where they hung about my neck.

"Don't take them off," I warned. "They're safest there."

With a deep gasp he scrutinized them. That one

which the Sachem had written in my presence, and which had so interested my late prisoner, Mahogany-Face gave only a cursory nod to. "That's Greek to me," he muttered. But the other, the design of which I have copied elsewhere in these pages, his greedy eyes devoured. "Aye, aye," he said, and nodded gravely now. He studied it until its least line must have been engraved upon the brain of him. Then he stood erect, still breathing heavily.

"And all these weeks and weeks," he said, "I've been thinking that dead-eye swab had got it off *him* before you hove along!"

"What is it?" I asked bewilderedly.

He shook his great red head. "Why, can't you see, my hearty? I told you the fellow you call Van Veen was close on when your Sachem died. Van Veen and the buck in Van Veen's pay trailed him and wounded him; but ere the white man could rob him, there came the noise of your approach. That young brave finished his job before you finished *him,* but Esau Pencarris, the black Cornishman—oh, Van Veen, if you want still to name him so!—he was ever the cautious villain: he hid until he could make sure of how many there were of you—and then his buck was dead and your friend had

reënforced you and he was outnumbered before he could get up the courage to act." Mahogany-Face laughed bitterly. "To the night I came across his wake in Boston, I thought I'd sailed on a stern chase after him from the Connecticut—and all that while it was he that was the follower: he was following you."

There were too many mysteries in this for me.

"But he's a French spy," I said.

"No doubt that, too." My friend cared naught for such a phase of his enemy's activities. "With his brigantine and its contraband cargo in the harbor all ready to give a false account of him first and carry him away later! Well, you caught him a-spying and that rushed him off before he'd accomplished his other purpose. But his other purpose was his main one—and if that's not Gospel, you may scuttle *me!*"

"He was on my trail?"

"As sure as I'm an honest sailorman—as I have been on his since ever he first robbed me."

Robbed him?—There were fifty questions more that I wanted to ask, but Mahogany-Face forbade them. A degree of calm was returning to him, and with it some degree of his former reticence.

"But *I've* told *you* everything I know," I pointed out.

He saw the fairness of my protest, yet gave me his old wide wink.

"And you shall have your reward," he declared. "You'll be better paid for this day's work along o' me than you're like to be for any other till you reach the end of *all* your days. Oh, at the right and proper time I'll spin you a yarn that will open your eyes! But first don't you want to do your duty by General Sandy and lay that cruising prisoner o' yours by the heels again?"

So he recalled me to what was owing our commander, though it seemed he concerned himself little about his own debt in that quarter and was now repeating his offer of assistance solely on my account. I blushed for my dereliction and turned toward that place in the stockade of brush to which the tracks of the retreating Indians pointed:

"But I think you might tell me what this bark of the Sachem's means."

He winked once more, and his face was bright with the significance of it. "It means treasure—it means Spanish dollars: that's what it means." He laughed as I tramped ahead of him, and "Dollars, mate Nicho-

las!" he repeated. "Not England's or France's or any Indian's any more than it's King Philip V's of Spain. It's mine, my hearty—with a fine share for you—and if ever I clap eyes on it (as now it's sure I shall), no Englishman nor Frenchman either will touch it more, except over my dead body. The which if it's not Gospel, you may scuttle *me!*"

Could this be a chance to justify my runaway enlistment by repairing my poor father's fortunes? Mahogany's return to secretiveness was enough to make me *want* to scuttle him, but to my further insistence he—pleading that the woods had ears and that we must devote ours to helping our eyes in the present pursuit—would say only:

"Away now and break it!"

That we did. The track was fairly clear, for even Indians cannot conceal their traces when they are carrying the body of a comrade, and presently it reached and continued along one of those frank trails which, as I have remarked, traversed the swamp at several angles, having been made by red men crossing back and forth over the morass in times of peace. There the weighted footprints still continued visible.

Salt-water lore my splendid friend had, but the true

wood-knowledge was all mine. I explained that we must be gaining on the fugitives: they were handicapped; we, though we had delayed and they had had a start of us, went lightly.

"Carry your rifle ready," I advised, "like mine: slanting stock-upward from right to left in front of you." He was not much more used than most seafaring men to long firearms and would have mired his muzzle a dozen times. "Look: one hand midway down the barrel and under it, the index-finger of the other just safe from the trigger—so."

He grumbled that he had rather use knife or pistol any day. "Having pledged my help," says he dolefully, "I'm no man to steer another course; but as soon as you make port, or the enemy sink you, why I'll hold you to help me, or hold myself at liberty to clear out, on my own business, as the case may be. 'Tis your prisoner, not mine, we're after, and once you've done your duty, I shall turn to my own affair."

When he got upon his dislike for serving any remotest English cause, his voice generally rose. It did so now—and voices carry far in such a place as this swamp. I warned him to silence, for here the prints of moccasins that we were following appeared most fresh indeed.

The trail had swung northwest and far from that hewn one which led toward Colonel Vaughan's position. We were deep in the heart of the morass. Right and left, the earth was boggy, the brush grew high, and the dark tree-tops met overhead. I went a-tiptoe and directed Mahogany-Face to do the same.

But his speech was irrepressible. Presently, though in a somewhat less unguarded tone, he said:

"A word more with you, Master Rowntree."

" One only, then," I answered, going forward still. "And say it softly."

" I've been thinking," he pursued, " that mayhap I do owe you a bit more information. Do you know much o' recent history? "

Was it possible to imagine a more perverse man, or one who timed his concealments and revelations with such small discretion? Recent history! I wanted to send him straight away on that mysterious business to which he was so devoted; but all I said was a whispered " No."

" Why then," says he, " perhaps this will recall it to you. Did you never notice my right ear: that I have none? Look at this," he concluded; " I always carry it with me to bear my revenge in mind. Look at it and see

if it doesn't bring somewhat to the foretruck o' your memory."

We were at a twist of the trail. Over my shoulder he thrust an object, which I took to quiet him—and which I nearly dropped from my paralyzed fingers when I saw its nature. Shrivelled, shrunken and yellow—it was a dried human ear!

"Avast there—careful," he continued, seeing my start. "Don't lose my keepsake!"

It is to be supposed that this command accounts for my immediately subsequent action, executed without consciousness. To receive that horrid object, I had shifted my rifle to my left arm-crook, but had not ceased advancing. There, as we turned the trail's bend, lay, thirty yards ahead, an Indian; he rested on a rare patch of dry moss by the track.

It was my late captive. Apparently, his bearers—hearing Mahogany-Face's voice and reasoning that we approached in some force because we did not approach in silence—had abandoned their wounded man in order to make good their own escape. No turning back to my comrade for me! I dropped his ear in my pocket and, recovering proper hold of my rifle, ran forward.

Something tripped me. From the bushes flame

spouted, and a great noise shattered the swamp's silence. Those were shots! I fell.

As I fell, I spun 'round. I saw the great bulk of Mahogany-Face pitch over and crash into the ooze beside the trail.

CHAPTER XXII

THE MESSAGE OF THE BARK

WHEN my senses returned, it was to find myself in an unfamiliar part of the swamp and removed from any sign of a trail. Here the dank undergrowth, which now completely encircled me, grew even thicker than I had known it elsewhere in that accursed morass. The air hung heavy with the foul odor of decay, and a graveyard-mist crawled along the ground. Wounded I did not seem to be; but my head ached from my tumble. I was bound hand and foot and had just been deposited upon the damp, ill-smelling earth.

Fronting me lay the eagle-faced brave who had shot himself while seeking my life that morning and now, it appeared, was to make me pay therefor. Over me bent two other Indians, very like him in feature and exactly

similar as to the war-paint on their thin cheeks and sleek bodies. They must have borne me hither to conduct whatever infamy they were set upon, removed from that spot to which their noisy attack might already have called attention.

There was no other prisoner. I was alone with these savages and at their mercy. What would they do with me?

The injured Mic-Mac said something in what must have been his native tongue, and pointed to my breast. His companions leaned so close to me that the scent of that oil with which they had prepared their bodies for the war-path stole heavily up my nostrils. A first red man tore open my jacket; the second put a quick hand upon those pieces of bark suspended from my neck.

It seemed that the fact of there being a pair of these tokens had not been mentioned to him. He half turned his hesitating face to the recumbent brave and held up his left index and middle fingers.

That was intelligible: he was asking which was the piece of bark required. The answer was lost on me, but, as if to help identify the desired piece, the questioner chose one at random and (it happening to be the one the Sachem had written in my presence) began to read

it rapidly through—in that same language, of course, of which I understood not a single word, though the double effect was soon to be brought home to me.

The robber had chosen rightly—for himself and his friends. Immediately, they became as indifferent to the strip that had interested Mahogany as Mahogany had been to this piece that interested them. At the first sentence, both listeners nodded, as at some general reference to a matter with which they were acquainted. At the second, the reader's voice broke; he stopped abruptly.

His neighbor gave a grunt of surprise. As for my former captive, he almost started upright.

You will remember that, in the morning, he had had but a glimpse of this bark—probably of only its opening words. The next—whatever else they were—brought upon his eagle face something as near consternation as ever I knew an Indian's face to betray.

He uttered a phrase that sounded as if he doubted the correctness of the reading. The reader reread what had produced this sensation. Shaven heads were shaken; above the crawling mist, gray feathers waved in disappointment. As plain as English now, the guttural voices were saying:

"These things amaze us; but only one certain man could write them, and they must be true!"

A gesture of the injured savage's head bade the work continue. The reader went on to the end, but did, just before it, come upon some other unexpected—though less startling—message, which made all three Mic-Macs look at me with a new expression. It made the two nearer me query the third.

He bowed assent. The reading concluded. Then—without a word of warning; without so much as a quick intake of his breath—that red man who had originally wrenched open my jacket pushed his neighbor aside and, leaning farther forward, whipped out of his belt a long knife with a bone haft and a blade that sent a spasm down my spine.

What now?

His face was set again in Indian rigidity, but his sinewy arm raised that knife aloft. I clenched my teeth to stop a cry for mercy, and shut my eyes.

Plain enough what now! There I lay, fast bound and helpless: one lad alone, about to be done to death, as I conceived it, at the hands of this full-grown savage and with the approval of those other two.

My toes curled in my moccasins. My every muscle

tightened to receive the fatal blow. My quailing body forced itself downward, a good inch more, into the wet earth.

Half a second passed—like an hour.

I thought again of my father—of my forsaken studies that he had, by such hard economies, provided me the opportunity to pursue—my mind rushed back to that best of animal friends in Pennsylvania, my stallion Success, probably at this moment grazing in the river-meadow at Lynton, but—faithful fellow that he was—always thinking of the time when I should come back; I thought of Sir Geoffrey, my great friend now pushing his cause for the Stuarts in France, or would it be Italy?—And I thought of Hi Cobb—of Tatters, too, whom none would care for—and of Edward Cartlidge, who had gone before me. In this flash on the dial of time, I thought until thought sank exhausted.

How long could that knife be held aloft to torture my mind—before it plunged downward to end my life?

"The young Yenghee soldier is free."

The words were spoken in the Indian-French of him who had been my captive not many hours ago! Unable to believe my ears, I opened my eyes ——

Yes, I was free! The long knife had been raised only

to set me at liberty, and its bright blade did its work so well that I never felt the severance of the cords as the keen edge cut through them.

I staggered to my feet. To my jaundiced gaze, the gloomy circle of underbrush seemed to be dancing dizzily 'round and 'round; but the eagle face of that savage who had pronounced my rescue remained stationary and distinct. It was quite immobile, showing no more kindness now than it had shown hatred a few moments since —a face of Indian justice and naught beside.

"The young Yenghee soldier is free," this wounded Mic-Mac was continuing, "because the last part of picture-letter says it shall be so, for a great service done by him to the Sachem Alexander—or attempted."

Through my mazed mind ran what had been said far away south there in that New England Valley (and, as it appeared, so long ago!). The Sachem had there spoken of the Mic-Macs and Abenakis. This, then, was a safe-conduct among them!

"The sole thing young Yenghee must do is give us that piece of bark which has been read to us."

He concluded. My hands fumbled at my throat.

Why had I not remembered the Sachem's words before? I cannot tell you, except to say that no young

memory is long, and that my mind had been filled to overflowing by my new experiences. Ought I now to surrender what had proved so useful? Hesitancy stayed me, yet, whether I ought or not, I needs must.

I looked from one red man to another. The wounded brave was harmless; but of the unharmed two, though they had laid aside their rifles, one still held his knife and both were very close to me, intent on my every motion.

Then something compelled me to look beyond them. It must have been the slightest of sounds. No doubt their savage ears would have heard it ere my duller sense was reached, save for the fact that something on the bark besides my safe-conduct had so absorbed them. Whatever the reason, I saw before they did a face peering in at us through the encircling screen of bushes.

Long it was and narrow and very dark. The cold mouth closed like a trap; the nose was sharp. And the eyes? While its mate shot malice at me, one orb stared fixedly aloft as if communing with the dread Prince of the power of the air, the Enemy of Man.

Van Veen!

I cried out. The Indians turned. Too late: even as my lips had opened, he jumped into the midst of us.

He carried a pistol in each hand, and one pistol he fired.

Mahogany-Face had implied that Van Veen (or Esau Pencarris, as he called him) was a coward, at least when courage could be avoided. Perhaps it now could not be —perhaps what I later learned to be " the black Cornishman's " motive had grown too desperate. To be sure, those rifles were on the ground, but we were three active persons to his one, and yet he set upon us with all the devilish daring and speed of an accomplished murderer.

I said he fired. The Mic-Mac that had held the knife dropped it, bounded in air uttering a sound like the neighing of a horse—came down—bent double—fell dead.

His comrade darted toward the rifles. Van Veen whisked between and raised his left hand that held the unexploded pistol. The Indian reversed his course and darted into the underbrush. Van Veen fired again, but this time his bullet went wild. He was no such marksman with that hand as with the other, nor had it reached the proper level when the trigger was pulled: I saw a bush clipped only a couple of feet above the ground.

To me the whole thing had been too sudden for any

action at all. Now impulse ordered me to imitate the runaway, but to go in the opposite direction—yet, pat upon that impulse, Van-Veen-Pencarris dropped one pistol and seized my arm in a grip that threatened to break it.

He raised the butt of the remaining weapon. He leered.

" Shall I kill you? " he asked, and his liquorish breath stank in my nostrils.

Whatever mask he had worn in Boston he had long since discarded: not even Councilor Wigglesworth would have believed in him now. His bad eye laughed at Heaven; his good one glared redly. Wicked as he had looked when peeping through the bushes, he seemed here a spiteful caricature of that self.

" You can," said I, for I was powerless—and steeled myself against death for the second time within five minutes.

Meanwhile the wounded Mic-Mac—the one that had shot himself that morning—was painfully, but craftily, dragging his maimed body toward the bush. Van Veen had appeared to disregard him, but had seen all the time.

" I shall attend to him first," said he.

He slipped my right upper-arm betwixt his side and

his upper left and held it there as securely as in a vise. Having me thus, he calmly reloaded a pistol.

I guessed what was coming, and sickened at it. The Indian knew and, now knowing also that escape was impossible, rolled over and stolidly faced the inevitable.

Van Veen raised his weapon—aimed carefully—fired. Struck, as I judged, squarely in the heart, his victim quivered and died.

"That was a very pretty shot," said the Black Cornishman, and spat a derisive stream of tobacco-juice toward his victim.

CHAPTER XXIII

DOUBLE TREASON?

PRISONER as I was, and threatened with a death as wanton as that Mic-Mac's, I might in no degree view such a crime silently. Well aware of my peril, I yet swelled with outrage and, in my own despite, cried:

"You blackguard!"

"Hold your tongue," said Van Veen, still too self-satisfied, however, to feel real anger. "A very pretty shot." He reloaded.

Besides terrifying, he puzzled me. Was he not in the French employ, and were not these Indians the allies of France? Of one thing only could there be certainty regarding him: a completer monster never trod honest shoe-leather!

"And now," said he, "I'll just be relieving you of a burthen that I should have borne long ago." Keeping

his pistol ready, he jerked the pieces of bark from my neck and ran his live eye over them. "You cannot read the Indian writing anyhow, can you?"

I wouldn't answer.

"Tut-tut! *Can* you?" he repeated more seriously.

Still I kept my peace.

He retook my arm. "Speak!" he commanded.

I went white: I could feel that I did. "You told me to hold my tongue," said I.

Clearly it ran in his mind to make an end of me then and there; but almost at once he thought better of it. Instead, his thin hands twisted my arm until the sweat of agony stood out upon my forehead. Death I could face; torture my youth could not long endure.

"No, I can't read it!" I sobbed.

"That's more polite. Did anybody in Boston or among Pepperell's men?"

"No."

"And I take it I arrived before those Mic-Macs read it."

So I must have seen him as soon as he reached the spot! I kept silent again, but now he was apparently studying the writing that (though he guessed it not) had lately so amazed my red captors whose taking of me

he, ignorant of how they had released me, evidently understood as an ordinary chance of war. A new inspiration came to him, which his swart face disclosed; he did not press his inquiry, and thus remained ignorant of the savages' acquaintance with the letter. He whistled reflectively a bar of some old ballad.

"Well," he presently resumed, "as I *can* read the stuff it's best in my keeping." He looked next at the piece that was a map—looked hard—then put both pieces in his pocket. His smile became hideously ingratiating. "But there's no harm telling you that I set some store by these trifles and am willing to make a payment for them." The brute glanced significantly at the murdered Indian and quickly back to me. "Will you cry quits, Rowntree?"

What was he up to now? "'Tis your fight," said I.

"What? When you began by thwarting me in Cambridge and near overtaking me in Boston?" he grinned. "If luck hadn't brought me upon you here —— But we'll not quarrel over who's to blame. The point's this: you're a clever lad and may be more useful alive than dead. Sit you down."

I squatted on the ground in the white mist, and he opposite me. So, watching the effect of his words out of

his good eye, while the other appeared fixed on the darkening tree-tops, he made his traitorous offer.

He was head of the French King's spies in America, having especial regard to dealings with the Indians; yet he was entirely venal: he served his present master, as he had probably served others, out of no love for a cause, but solely for what money he could extract from it. Seated there before me, with the mist wreathing his sinister visage until he looked like some malignant emanation from the swamp, he boasted of his opportunities for duplicity and coolly offered to sell his master, General Duquesne, and Louisburg to Pepperell by revealing a certain secret entrance to the fortress through use of which the town could easily be taken.

"For five hundred pound," said he—"and I call that dirt cheap! All *you* have to do is to take my proposal to your commander and get his promise (I know he can be relied on) that I'll not be molested if I enter his lines. Then I'll come in and tell him the whereabouts of that secret entrance—yes, and guide him to it, too."

Somewhere off in the misty swamp an owl hooted, and I thought I heard, from yet farther away, the cry of a wolf. Such sounds were fit accompaniment to what the Black Cornishman was saying!

Was he—for his own gain, to be sure—making a true offer? Nobody could trust him, and to me there seemed a deal more here than met my ear. He was avowedly a creature that would not relinquish a good thing except for a better. It might well be that he schemed to lead a portion of our army into a trap. Or was there an unrevealed calamity threatening the enemy from within, and this vicious rat sought to leave the endangered ship? He was quite capable of playing with both sides—he was capable of anything!

Mist-wreathed, his ghostly form bent toward me.

"Come, now—what say you? Pepperell will do something for you as the bearer of such news, I warrant; and *I* sha'n't be niggardly, neither: if you can get me six hundred from him, why, fifty of it will go to you."

My plain duty was to report his offer, dubious as it might be, to General Sandy, for the decision in such matters must lie with him and not with a mere courtesy-cornet on his staff; but my disgust with Van Veen suddenly overrode all that. The man was trying to bribe me!

I sprang up.

"Do you think," I demanded, "that I would touch a farthing of what you got for playing Judas?"

My reproach he took lightly; the hinted refusal was a heavier matter. His cold mouth twitched.

"Why, then," said he, "if you're fool enough to refuse honest earned money, that's your affair; but give me"—and he toyed with his ready pistol—"an answer to my main proposal. Tut-tut: is it yes or no, my lad?"

"I won't have anything to do with it. Who could have faith in you? My answer's 'No'!"

He stood up, too, spitting. He spoke slowly:

"Think again, Rowntree. I'm an evil man to cross, and you've crossed me twice. My last visit to Massachusetts had two purposes: one you entirely spoiled (for the moment) and the other nearly. Now I give you one more chance. Take time to think."

My anger cooled at his plain threat, but not my determination. "I don't need it."

He swore: he could swear with a smile. "You shall have it anyhow, for, on second thoughts, I sha'n't kill you myself. I need some renewal of credit with my employers, and shall take you into their lines. About face—march!" He levelled his weapon; I had no choice but to obey. "After ten yards from here, there's a plain trail. My pistol's at your back. You have until we reach the French *grande garde* to change your mind;

but the moment we do reach it, there can be no changing."

"I'll denounce you," said I.

"And what are you that they should heed that?" he countered, pursuing his crab-walk behind me. "You're not in proper uniform; I'll deliver you up as a spy, caught endeavoring to corrupt the loyalty of our Indian allies. Better change your mind—it's that or swing."

Without reply, I plodded ahead of him into the thicket, making a rapid plan. The brambles tore my hair and lashed my face, but I was forbidden to lift my hands.

"Why, one of these bits of bark will alone convict you," continued the Cornish traitor. "It tells the refusal of the Massachusetts Indians to rise against the English, and it bespeaks your safety while delivering that news to our Mic-Macs. You've carried valuable information a long time without guessing it, and it's lucky I came up before our savage friends there read it."

We had reached the trail he had spoken of, and I breathed easier. Behind me, Van Veen went on talking. There is none so vain as your thorough blackguard, and this one—partly to impress me to his wishes through a realization of my position, but more, I believe, out of

desire to show what an important work he did—revealed all he knew. Why not? Thus he might win me, and if he failed, I need but be slaughtered.

At first he was unheeded by me. At last, however, he captured my full attention:

"Many's the tale that's gone abroad in your Colonies about a general Indian rising. Well, and there was truth at the bottom of them."

He, too, told of that crazy young "prophet," part Ottawa and part Ojibwa, secretly preaching in the Far West, from the Ohio to Lake St. Clair, a future union of red against white. Pontiac was his name (a name I was to remember eighteen years later!) and to him had fled no less a person than the grandson of that King Philip, the Wampanoag, who had united the savages from Maine to Connecticut and waged his "King Philip's War" in 1675.

"You stupid English," said Van Veen, "were clever enough to have Philip murdered at Mt. Hope and send his son to the Bermudas to die under a slaver's lash; but you forgot that son's son, and he was smuggled out of the cedar-forest at Worden's Lake and hidden away. He grew up to hate the people that had robbed him. Aye, and as an old man he fell in with this Pontiac's

plans and came back East to help them there. Pontiac is looking far ahead, but Philip's heir was too old to wait. He urged immediate action, and that suited the French."

I knew now whom I had seen die in the Connecticut Valley. "His name ——" I began.

"Yes," said the Cornishman—"Alexander. I had him killed because he failed to raise his rebellion. He was on his way to warn our northern tribes of his failure, and such news would have made them desert the French. Even now they think your towns are being burned by their red brothers in Massachusetts. If they did not, they would leave us to-morrow. Well, I have twice averted that catastrophe—I! Why, there's large reenforcements of them—Abenakis—due any minute; and every day I am telling the others of how my couriers bring word of fresh massacres in the south!"

How far would the man's strange pride take him? I could not bring myself to flattery, but I could taunt.

"Ah, well," said I, "we'll starve you people out despite your savages."

"*You* won't be here to see it," he answered—"unless you change your mind. No, and we sha'n't be starved, either. Have you never heard of Captain Barbetorte?"

I hadn't.

" The worst man that sails the seas," said Van Veen as one scholar might pay an over-polite compliment to another, whom he considers almost his equal. "And the best sailor, too. He can run any blockade, as all the Spanish Main's aware: your Commodore Warren can't stop *him*. Well, he's been put in command o' a French man-o'-war, the *Vigilant*—sixty-four gun she carries—loaded to the rails with food and sent hither from Brest in Brittany. If it weren't for her, why, you would have us; but we got word of her purpose before Pepperell ever showed his nose here, and now we're looking for her any likely night. And what will your English do then, when we have the Abenakis and the food? No, Rowntree: there's only one sole power can deliver Louisburg to you and save your green army's scalps—and that sole power is me!"

CHAPTER XXIV

ONE TRICK—AND ANOTHER

SO this was the master-spy—a creature that, when he guarded his tongue and controlled his features, could deceive even the canny folk of Boston! This babbling enthusiast was the conscienceless double-dealer, the cold-blooded assassin! Never before had I understood how there might be two characters in one body.

It was well for me that his leering face looked only at my back: my own face must else have betrayed how he had betrayed himself. For he had! The vain braggart had revealed one thing far more important than any that he boasted. In order to enhance his value to Pepperell in my estimation, he had laid a little too much stress upon those matters of food and reënforcements:

"If it weren't for the *Vigilant* you would have us."

Liar as he was, that slip shone with the very lustre of truth, and what it meant was plain as a pikestaff. Indians could live off the land, as no white could, but Louisburg was starving!

The fate of Pepperell's expedition hung, then, on two things: the savages' ignorance of lack of coöperation on the part of their brother red men throughout New England, and the fortunes of this terrible Captain Barbetorte's vessel. If the deception of the Indians was successfully continued and the food got in, then we Colonials were as good as defeated—but if the Indians learned of that falsehood, they would desert the French; and if the supplies were not landed, the fortress would be forced to capitulate.

This was an unconscious revelation worth a dozen calculated allegations of secret-gateways made by a professional spy!—But how was I to convey it to General Sandy? Already, I calculated, the circuitous trail must have circled the right flank of the French outposts. But I had not forgotten my earlier plan, formed when we started.

"Well," says Van Veen. "Well? Now will you or will you not accept my offer?"

To that swamp-mist was adding now a thick fog,

creeping in from sea. Sight was difficult. I stumbled over an exposed root. Van Veen was shambling so close behind me that he nearly fell upon me.

"None o' that," he said sharply. "My pistol's mighty handy." He poked my back with the warning barrel, arched a spray of tobacco-juice over my head, and repeated "Well—*well?*"

Mixture of fox, peacock and wolf that he was, dared I test a mite further his real reasons for wanting to come over to us? Was there, besides, the time?

"I've half a mind ——" I muttered, plodding on between the trees.

"Aye," said he: "better make it a whole one. Tut-tut! 'twill be a rope, and a noose in it for you, if you don't."

"Were I only sure ——"

"Ask what you'd like to know."

"How can I tell you've read that one piece of bark rightly?"

"I pass you my word of honor."

His word of honor! "But you can't read the other piece—at least, you have not."

He was silent a moment. Had I sounded simple and reasonable enough?

I had!

" That's no letter," he finally answered. " It's a map, and I'll prove you I'm honest by telling you exactly what map it is."

The which he did—or very nearly. I understood that the whole truth nobody ought to expect of such a rogue, but my conclusion was ultimately proved correct that he might impart a fair portion on this occasion, being doubtless resolved to send me where I could not hinder his profiting by the map—as soon as I had served his turn with Pepperell.

In 1740, the English Government sent a fleet around Cape Horn, under the great Anson, to ravage the east coast of South America and later attack the Isthmus of Darien. A storm dispersed his squadron, near Tierra del Fuego, so that the latter half of the project was rendered impossible of fulfilment; but Anson's *Centurion,* with one remaining ship, the *Helicon,* made a base of Juan Fernandez Island, captured a Cadiz galleon carrying 1,500,000 Spanish dollars and secured £30,000's worth of plunder by sacking the town of Paita.

So much all the world knew. What was fresh information to me followed:

Anson took most of this treasure aboard the *Centurion* when he sailed away from South America to circumnavigate the globe, but he loaded a goodly portion aboard the *Helicon* and ordered her home by way of the Atlantic. Bad weather delayed her, supplies ran low, the men grumbled, and, as she had been blown far out of her course, her captain planned to put into Boston for relief. When she neared that port, another tempest drove her far north, the crew mutinied, and the long and the short of it was that she piled up on Cape Breton not far from Louisburg.

"All hands were lost," said Van Veen, with that relish in his voice with which he had described his latest murder as a good shot—" save the boatswain, a pair of his jolly comrades and one silly fellow they'd been fools enough not to do 'way with, who was loyal to the dead captain."

Those words of Mahogany-Face uttered at Boston water-front rang in my ears: " The last time I set eyes upon Van Veen, he was boatswain and leader of the mutineers of the *Helicon.*" I durst not turn round as I asked:

"And the treasure?"

"Aye, the treasure," my Cornish captor croaked; " a

hundred thousand Spanish dollars! That had been divided fair and square, share-and-share alike among the merry men when they took the ship, and it was in their chests. Well, I've heard tell (for I wasn't there, mark you) that more than a half went down with the boat, when she broke up on the rocks. She split clean in two, but her forward half held high and dry for a day, and out o' that they unloaded near fifty per cent."

Of course his one reason for not boasting of his part in this villainy was that he did not want the crime to lie against him when he passed over into Pepperell's lines. Spy he had frankly been, but for that he would negotiate pardon by offering his services to us: mutiny on the high seas against an English captain was, however, a matter over which a colonial army-officer could possess no jurisdiction. Realizing this, I pressed on to my own goal:

"And the money was buried, and that second piece of bark is the map to its place of burial?"

"Rightly surmised, Rowntree—but not those sailormen's map."

Cursing the luck, he said that the survivors had been surprised by Mic-Macs under the Sachem Alexander, then on one of his missions north, and that he seized the treasure and forced two of his prisoners to carry it some

distance off and bury it against the time when his plans were ripe.

"Just where he went the other prisoners could not see," complained Van Veen; "but they heard him shoot the diggers after their work was done, and saw him, when he was come back, make this very map here for his future guidance. Then one of them escaped, and I think the other—later. He that got away first told me. When I took service with the French, I learned from their red men that Alexander had a hidden treasure; he was going to use it to buy from traders the rifles that Louisburg, which supplied the Mic-Macs, couldn't give the Abenakis." The wretch paused for breath, spat and then concluded: "So you see I'm playing fair with you, for I've told you where there's hidden a mint o' money."

Not quite—for he retained that map! But he had confirmed certain important suspicions of mine. If so much gold was his for the taking, why should he offer to betray his employers for a few hundred pounds? There could be but one reason: the treasure would not be safely his if he was made prisoner by the fall of Louisburg. He wanted to be on the winning side—the town and garrison *must* be starving!

I had taken him at his word: had indeed asked him all that I wanted to know. And he answered better than he guessed. Now for action!

"Well ——" I started, and half turned.

"Face about!" he snapped. "Keep going until we've struck a bargain. Time enough to walk beside me then."

"But ——" I protested.

He gave me what I desired: a rude shove. I swayed, as he supposed from the result of it, but in actuality from long design. Remember that he was close upon me in his eagerness: I had stumbled once before through purpose; through purpose—and guided by the measurements then acquired—I stumbled now. I went clear down. My feet caught his ankles; I drew up my knees and brought him smash atop of me.

He wasn't ready for that. I was. Before he knew what was happening, I had his pistol-hand fast and turned him over.

"Now," said I, wrenching his exposed weapon to my own uses, "it's you that will march." And I took away his other pistol. "Get you up, spy!"

He struggled to his feet out of the mire and rose before me in the enwreathing fog, as swarthy as the bush

about us, as dark as the night would soon be that was gathering overhead. His dead eye laughed with thwarted hate.

That was the only time in my life that I really wanted to kill a man who was already in my power, but I stayed the fingers itching at the pistol's trigger. An instant later my forbearance received an ill reward.

His horrid face became that of a cringing suppliant. He leaned forward, and his long nose quivered.

" For the love of mercy, one word! "

It was only curiosity at the change in him that bade me listen. " Then out with it."

He closed his chewing mouth. His swarthy throat worked as if he were sobbing. His tight lips worked, too. Then suddenly those lips pursed and he spat a great stream of tobacco-laden saliva square in my eyes.

I started back from the stinging filth. The pistol exploded—but, blinded, I had flung it too high. Unharmed, the Black Cornishman plunged into the thick underbrush.

CHAPTER XXV

AT THE MERCY OF THE FOG

CHASE I gave—but he had the start of me. This nauseous scuttle was master of a wild speed, and he must have known that part of the swamp as thoroughly as he knew the palms of his own guilty hands.

Now the bushes swayed five yards ahead, and I dived at them—only to receive their blows upon my face and flounder in the mud under them, which sprang half-way to my knees. Then, when passage had been fought through these impediments, there came a movement of the bush ten yards on my right, and that was stilled ere I reached the spot, while, twice as far away, the invisible fugitive's passage agitated the undergrowth to the left of me: water there—and more mud at its bottom.

Within three minutes of twisting and turning through vine and bramble and deepened fog, nothing except the

sounds of flight remained to guide me. Then these grew fainter: two minutes more and the very sounds were gone. I had to give over my enterprise.

Nor was that the worst. However well Van Veen might be acquainted with this section of the morass, to me it was wholly unexplored country, and the thick weather and the late hour made determination of direction impossible. I might have to lie here until daylight —or until Van Veen, though himself now unarmed, brought French sentries to take me. What else was to be done save wait?

Well, I was never the sort for waiting: better than inaction was a blind walk to death. In the fog, and after all my roundabouts, I gave a guess as to where might be the southwest and Vaughan's command—and headed in the direction chosen.

Nevertheless, my progress was made with such caution as the darkness permitted. I stepped slowly and never lowered foot without first extending my hands before me—never gave weight to my advance before first tapping the ground with my toes. It will be understood that not much space could thus be covered by halt an hour's going, yet it must not have been longer that I proceeded ere the earth grew firmer and a slight lessen-

ing of the night told me of a cleared patch beyond. Dimly ahead, what seemed to be a star twinkled close to the horizon.

I stopped short. This could be no place that I knew —certainly it could not be Vaughan's location. I dropped softly on my belly.

Noise there ever is in the undisturbed dark of wild country: the grass whispers, and the trees audibly conspire; there are the sudden, furtive sounds, like laughter, of tiny animals and the stealthy pad of larger beasts. Had such now been freely audible, the more regularly my heart would have beaten—but a quiet that I did not like brooded over everything about me. Once, lying here, I was made to start by the stomach-turning unearthliness of an owl's cry as the unseen bird of prey descended upon its quarry, yet immediately the realization came that no other owl had cried since Van Veen parted company with me—and in this swamp respite of the sort was unnatural.

What was the matter? There is only one thing that mutes lower beings: the presence of higher.

My ears strained. They strained to aching—and then I heard something to prompt me to berate my woodcraft once more in error. Somewhere ahead near that

faint, low-suspended star, the merest wavelets of a placid sea were lapping a stretch of low, sandy beach. I had come in exactly the opposite direction to my planned course—was at the water's edge deep within the enemy's lines and close northeast of Louisburg!

I wriggled a yard forward. While I did so, the fog thickened and extinguished that brave star, but, just as it went out, I saw the silhouette of something between it and me, and then I heard oars in motion.

"A quiet night!"

The French words flew carelessly. The answer followed as free as they from all suspicion of eavesdroppers:

"And a dull job."

A boat was beached.

Bad as my situation was, to return to the thickness of the swamp where I had already once lost my way would be doing anything rather than bettering it. Here I at least and at last knew my whereabouts. I lay still, hoping that the boatmen were some water-patrol safely returned for a rest from their first rounds of the evening.

And they were! Their next words proved it; soon their steps came toward me over the sands.

Toward me—but they couldn't be intending to enter

the bush! I held my breath. They were almost on me now: four men. The boots of one of them kicked sand in my wide eyes.

They then turned, abruptly. The patrol arrived safe at its base, was going townwards to report.

I scarce waited the death of their easy voices. I ran to the boat. The oars lay in it—why should they not? There was no lock-and-chain—why should there be at such a place of safety? What strength possessed me, you can guess better than it is possible for me to describe. First tugging at the stern, then shoving at the prow, I launched that boat,—ran after its ultimately hurried departure—climbed aboard from waist-high water and, regardless of noise, fell to with the intention of rowing well out and then striking south to our own lines.

Six strokes—and no alarm.

Twelve.—Still none.

Two dozen. The fog had shut around me as completely as if it were the sides of a well and I had fallen down the shaft; but my close shave with Van Veen (for I would never have consented to carry his proposal to General Sandy) must have touched my nerves: I did not yet feel far enough from the spy and his employers

to turn southwards parallel to the coast, albeit the sea was calm as the Susquehanna in a fair August, and I should be making distance rapidly.

Now, it must be remembered that, for all my river-knowledge acquired at home in Pennsylvania, and my sculling about Boston harbor, I possessed little except second-hand acquaintance with the sea, having been but once upon open salt-water and that only when I crossed the Atlantic as a mere immigrant to America. In the stress of escape from the swamp, I had embarked buoyantly upon an adventure for which my scant qualifications would have sufficed on the single condition of sticking within the limits of the bay, whereas now I must have headed straight out of it.

For a long, long time I rowed (the walls of that well-shaft advancing with me), still for the primal purpose of putting space between myself and possible pursuit. Then I felt a still gentle, but more marked, undulation and realized that my boat had reached open water. And *then* I bethought me how I habitually pulled harder with my right arm than with my left—understood that, while going forward, I had undoubtedly described some incalculable numbers of circles—knew that I was again as completely lost as Hi Cobb and I had been last

Autumn in that now far-away Valley of the Connecticut.

There was no land to observe, no star to guide: there was nothing to be seen beyond a rod's distance, save those walls of gray. The only sound was that of my foolish oars and the wash of the lazily hungry sea.

A kind of panic laid hold of me. For the first time in my life, I knew the agonies of that worst form of water-fear, which comes with the quenching of the direction-sense afloat. I pulled on in the mad hope of getting out of the fog: I might as well have tried to jump out of my own skin.

Onward and on—yet whither? My fagged brain commanded my fagged body again and again to cease where continuance offered nothing to gain; but the body would not obey. Time ended; only blind effort remained—blind and reasonless. I kept it up—or that panic-power did, which possessed me as if some demon had bound my real self and mastered my body: kept it up though my every muscle rebelled—though my eyes started from my head and my gasping chest could capture no more air—up until exhaustion itself thwarted the demon, and the oars flew free from nerveless hands, and he that had plied those oars slipped forward and lay

still on the boards where his feet had braced for a task impossible.

It could not have been more than an hour that I was stretched thus, and no consciousness of any breeze disturbed me; yet when I opened my eyes the boat was rocking in a slight sea—there was air on my cheek. I sat up. The purple dome of Heaven was spangled with the lamps of stars. A voice (I was as yet too bewildered to make out what it said) had hailed me from somewhere near—I could have sworn from the air above.

I looked. Yes, I was close under the port bow of a vast vessel—of a man-of-war—had barely (hidden in the trough of the waves) escaped being run down by her. Clustering faces bent toward me, over her quarter-deck rail.

What vessel?

Amidships, she faded into the night; but from dead ahead of her the moon rode high and full in the sky and painted her towering prow a shining silver. It showed the leaping bowsprit and the gleaming figurehead—an armed and crowned sea-nymph—below; by the side of that glinting figure, it revealed the great craft's name

even clearer than daylight had once revealed the *Spuyten Duyvil's:*

VIGILANT

And over that name were limned large the Royal Crown and white Lilies of France!

CHAPTER XXVI

CAPTAIN BARBETORTE

WHOSO has ever looked up from a mere row-boat at sea to the close side of any large ship will know how that black hull seems about to grind him under-water with no more consideration for him, and no more effect upon itself, than the wheel of a Troy-coach feels when it crushes an ant on the high-road. But few of you can realize what were my sensations as I that night regarded the tall bulk of the *Vigilant*. To have come through so much for such an end: I could wish to have been run down and drowned before ever recovering consciousness!

Meantime, I was drifting along her endless side, too deep confounded to estimate her draft or tonnage, but well aware of her formidability. She was like a sullen Hippocampos riding the waves. Now the tips of her

guns scowled from their ports fatiloquently open. Now, while that hailing voice angrily renewed itself, the stern drew near, and over the after portion of the spar-deck a poop appeared with ebon figures that must be the officers looking off at me.

What was I to do?

Prudence I never had, though I commend it to my grandchildren as a worthy characteristic; but had I possessed enough for a score of wiseacres, how would it have served me here? Even if I jumped into the sea, those men up there, their suspicions aroused, would have netted me out ignominiously before death came. Instead, I seized upon the first tale that came into my overwrought brain—and then seized the rope that was flung me from the *Vigilant*. As I swung clear of the rowboat, I forced her gunwale under water so that she might sink and no inscription painted on her reveal to my new captors the fact that she had been in military service.

Then, like a hooked fish, I was hauled aboard the man-o'-war and my pistols taken away.

"To the Captain," said one of the pair of thick-armed mariners that hauled me panting over the rail.

Along clean decks cleared for action, they led me to

the poop, I walking as boldly as I could, whereat arrived, they stood aside, behind some under-officers and left me fronting a personage whom it was easy to accept as Van Veen's "worst man that sails the seas and the best sailor."

Pierre Barbetorte was a Breton, Quimper-born, and in 1745 should have been about fifty years of age. He had passed half that time as a privateer of the old school, which is to say that he was little better than a pirate, in spite of his now commanding a French ship of the line, and he looked, I think, more ferocious than nature made him. He was very short—almost a dwarf as to height, but, without being fat—broad enough for a man of the stature of poor Mahogany. He wore a vain uniform, all gold braid, and a cocked hat rakishly atilt over grizzled snake-locks. His forehead was a thicket of wrinkles, and his eyebrows were veritable moustaches from under which eyes flashed green like a wolf's.

"*Eh bien,*" says he, "what does this mean?"

I was desperately in fear, but not yet quite so desperately as to be unable to conceal it. Summoning all my French to my command, I said:

"My name is Jules Chauvet, and I live in Louisburg. I was born and bred there."

I was hoping that my pretense of a colonial upbringing might explain those faults of accent and pronunciation of which there now temporarily fell upon me a horrid realization. Bitterly I wished that I had studied his language harder.

"It makes nothing what is thy name," he blared—and I saw that he lacked two front teeth in the upper jaw, for the clear moonlight fell directly upon him. "It is thy presence out here—and at such a time, too—that needs explaining. Explain it!"

Apart from all question of their relative degrees of evil, there exists a wide difference between a wicked man of courage and a treacherous villain. Van Veen vaunting himself for his ill-deeds was to be dreaded because of such vile cunning as he would, if he could, employ to one's destruction; this Captain Barbetorte compelled terror because it was evident that he could never himself experience it. My thoughts began to suffer confusion; my voice came a trifle unsteadily:

"I went for a row ——"

"At what hour?"

"At sundown."

"From Louisburg?"

"Yes, *monsieur.*"

"When it is in a state of siege?"

This question was obvious and should have been foreseen, but it had not been, and its blow considerably rocked me. So much mental energy went to the devising of a plausible reply that I feared for the French in which it must be couched, and spoke slowly:

"It was wrong of me, but I love the water. I watched for an opportunity and slipped by the patrols."

His corrugated brow frowned more deeply:

"Thou wilt go to jail for that when thou art arrived ashore!"

"Yes, *monsieur.*"

"And then?"

"Why—then, *monsieur* ——"

The foreign words came more and more tardily to my summons. Against my will, I was translating from the English instead of thinking in the French, and with every syllable I was speaking slower and slower: this his impatience would in no wise tolerate. He let out an oath that made me jump:

"Quick!—'What then?' I asked thee."

"I—I ——" The right words wouldn't come!

"Thinkest thou that time is nothing to me?" he bel-

lowed. "Answer immediately, or I will have thee given the lash!"

"I was blown out to sea," I stammered, "so that ——" And there I stopped in mid-sentence; for I had no intention of saying this at all, but the French word for "fog" refused my call upon it; a wretched part-memory of my futile excuse aboard the *Spuyten Duyvil* mastered my tongue—and what was arguable from such an explanation became instantly evident, even to me.

"Blown out to sea?" echoed Barbetorte, with another thumping oath. "When we have but this last ten minutes had the first breath of wind for half as many hours?" He threw back his gray head. "*Voici,* Michel Crosnier, give this young man a taste of the leather."

One of the seamen that had helped me over the ship's side lumbered forward. Of course the widespread calm and the thick fog causing it had been delaying the *Vigilant's* attempt to run Commodore Warren's blockade, so that this Breton was not likely to forget them! The man Crosnier's heavy hand gripped my already writhing shoulder.

Perversely, *two* French words for "fog" bounced

into my brain: "*le brouillard*" and "*la brume.*" Which was right in the present connection? Were both? My fancy heard the hissing whip and felt its dreadful blow. I made a quick choice: "*le brouillard*":

"*Mon capitaine,* I did not mean to say I had been blown out. Naturally, I am fatigued: a slip of the tongue, *monsieur.* I drifted, having lost my way because of the—because of the *brouillard.*"

What eyes he had! Was I right as to the word? And had the tide been at ebb or flow? It came upon me now that, in my desperate flight from shore, I had not so much as noted the tide. Since, in this land of lofty tides, I had not noted it, it was probably ebbing; but if I were not right this time—well, there could be no second explanation.

Right, however, I must have been. Barbetorte's habitual frown softened a little; a slight smile lighted his features, not unpleasant though it rendered more evident his lack of front teeth: I think he liked mettle in lads (as far as he liked lads at all) and, beginning at last to picture my lonely journey and weigh my present bearing, set down that quality to my credit. He motioned the sailor to release me.

But now see what pride over his subterfuge can do

for the most successful deceiver! I never yet knew good to come in the long run from prevarication. On this occasion, no worse could have happened to me at the hands of the former privateer than he did attempt—no, not even if I had told him the whole truth to begin with. As it was, however, I found myself very vastly set up by my ability to pull the wool across those eyes so recently dreaded. "Pride goeth before destruction, and the spirit is lifted up before a fall": the Father of Lies further seducing me, I must needs puff myself the more by the addition of unnecessary embellishments to my accepted story.

"It was as thick in the bay as it was out here, the fog," said I, my French seeming at last to run as fast and as pure as a rill in May; "but I did see when I had come out of the bay ——"

My purpose was to tell him that I had passed a trio of English ships the equals of the *Vigilant,* thinking thus to delay his attempt upon Warren's blockade, whereas we had no vessel so powerful as Barbetorte's, nor would any human opposition have balked him. But here again my sentence broke in the middle, though now it was he that broke it.

His bullet head shot toward me on a neck that proved long, out of all keeping with his general build.

"What is that?" he thundered. "Say me that again!"

I wondered if my tale could really so move him. "I saw ——"

"Not that. What thou saidest in advance of it."

"I—I ——" Something had gone wrong!

"Yes—yes. About thy passing out of the bay."

"Why, *monsieur,* when I ——"

I saw it now. Do you? If not, I fear my grandchildren's French is as faulty as mine was. For the true French would say "*quand je suis sorti*"—or "when I *was* come"—whereas *I* said "*quand j'avais sorti*"—or "when I *had* come"! I heard the distant voice of Nicholas Rowntree stammeringly try to repair that damage, but knew it was too late. His judge's piercing eyes *were* terrible, after all.

"None of that!" He mimicked me: "'*Quand j'avais sorti*'—my faith!"

The poop-deck fairly trembled beneath me. "I know well it is not the good French, *mon capitaine,* but we say it so in Louisburg."

"Do we?" He reached out and jerked me violently

to him, so that his monstrous eyebrows nearly brushed my nose. *"An' 'ow say we it in Boston?"*

I wished I could jump over the rail and speed my death. For Captain Barbetorte had shouted his final query in English: in English atrociously pronounced—but, for all that, English. The Frenchman had guessed my nationality.

CHAPTER XXVII

SEA-BATTLE: THE PRISONER OF DARKNESS

THOUGH he was then a shape of hate for me, because he had wrecked my pride, I believe in my heart at this day that, for all his show of vehemence, the old privateer had a certain admiration for one so young, daring so much as he conceived I had dared. He raged scarce thirty seconds, volleying demands, not for information concerning myself, but of Pepperell's position, whence he concluded I had directly come to spy out the French water-defenses and been indeed duped by the fog; but I fell tardily back upon rigid silence, and his rage left him as quickly as it had come.

"Thou art no sailor," said he; "a fool could see that, and so thou couldst probably tell me nothing unknown to me of their naval doctrine, anyhow—which is all that affects my movements."

He thought a moment only, and then went on almost as if speaking to himself:

"*Alors,* I could have thee flogged, as I meant to a while since, and loosen thy tongue on other matters thereby; but there will be time enough for that to-morrow—and to hang thee from a yard-arm afterwards. My duty is to make Louisburg with all speed, and only the good God knows how long this breeze will last.—Crosnier, Loubet: put him in the forehold—the brig is full of drunkards."

So the *Vigilant* was about to make that dash for shore upon which, and the Abenaki reënforcements, the fate of our Colonials' expedition depended, while ahead of Nicholas Rowntree lay a night's imprisonment, and death in the morning! Captain Barbetorte had never a word more for me; he turned his thick-set back and began giving rapid orders to his under-officers as if my existence were already terminated.

The two sailors hurled themselves at my shrinking body and dragged it, the toes scraping along the decks, and so below until a hatch was lifted, and I was thrust upon the top rounds of a ladder that precipitately descended into darkness. Then the hatch fell to above me, narrowly missing my head, and I was left alone to climb

downwards and sink beside some bale or other at the ladder's foot.

Blackness everywhere. Round about me a blackness smelling of pine-casings and sackings, and charged with the groan of timbers, the gurgling of water against the ship's sides overhead—for I was far below the water-line, on the very bottom of the *Vigilant*—and now and then traversed by some scratching, scampering sound with sundry squeaks, at first unnoted and next unintelligible. Blackness, too, within me—of despair: for what was now to come to brave Pepperell and his doughty men, and what of me?

Presently it became plain that the breeze had increased and the terrible Barbetorte had clapped on every inch of sail: that could be told down here by the louder strainings of the wood and rush of water against the sides. We must be making now the spurt past Warren's blockade that my little rowboat had slipped through unseeing and unseen.

I was starved and bruised, but could not have fed my craving stomach or rubbed my aching limbs had I been sitting on a sack of ham or a medicine-chest full of embrocations. My thoughts wandered dolefully. Would Tatters go hungry? He could shift for himself

if he were free, I knew, and the soldier with whom I had left him had promised his care, under my cautionings; but if he were tied up—soldiers are forgetful folk! I felt shame for my late forgetfulness, amid that afternoon's and evening's excitements, of Cartlidge, killed in action, and Mahogany, shot down in the swamp.—And my own desperate situation: here was the result of running away from that college to which my father had so painfully sent me. . . .

Then came that scampering again. Little green eyes peered at me. Rats! Would they attack? I thought not, but wished that Tatters were here: he was the best ratter (I have omitted to say, but recalled it then) of any dog at Harvard College, and he had distinguished himself on that sea-voyage north from Boston. . . .

The Abenakis would of course achieve their junction with the French; Pepperell being ignorant of their approach, there was nothing to stop them. Therefore, if the *Vigilant* made port, our expedition would be doomed.

"I wish," I cried, "that I could sink this accursed vessel!"

Whereat a voice replied out of my own mind:

"Perhaps you can."

Why not—perhaps? My captors had not thought of my endangering my own life to imperil theirs: they had not shackled me. Any ship bound out from France to one of her colonies would probably bear for the colonists not only food, however badly food was needed, but also some few such implements as were not manufactured in the new land—bits and augers, for instance. The *Vigilant* might have these in this very hold.

A rat ran across my legs and startled me into activity. You will remember that I carried always a few tallow-dips and my woodsman's materials for striking a light (another precaution owed to Edward Cartlidge's teaching), and Crosnier and Loubet, having deprived me of Van Veen's pistols when I came aboard, were later either too hurried or too scornful to search me. Now those remaining possessions were put to use without further delay—and, all in a moment, I forgot my plight!

Held aloft, the resultant illumination was not much, for it left three-quarters of the hold in profound darkness, and proved none too strong within the circle described about me; yet it showed enough of a cargo that even my eyes, untutored to judge stevedores' work, could tell had been hastily and badly stowed. The ranks of huge sacks and boxes towered to the deck overhead,

but were frailly braced on either side of a narrow aisle in which I stood, and this in such manner that my wonder was why they had not shifted long ago: the *Vigilant* must have encountered only calm seas from the ill-reputed Bay of Biscay's northern edge to the banks of Newfoundland. However, that was nothing to my present purpose; what delighted my gaze, after ten minutes' close search, was the espisal of a certain chest that had toppled from the summit of this cargo-range and lay, broken open, far down the dim aisle.

It looked like a carpenter's box. I ran to it. Lifted the splintered boards.

It was! Providence favored me once more. It contained, or rather had spewed out, two hammers, some saws of various sizes, a heavy mallet, a bit-stock—aye, and a ship-auger and expanding-auger as well!

Time: that was the question now. I meant to bore enough holes to sink, or at least cripple, the ship, plugging each as soon as made, then to draw out the plugs, dash up the ladder, hammer off the hatch and trust to Heaven abovedecks. But I had no idea how far out the *Vigilant* had been lying: would she make port before my task was performed?

Well, if I did not succeed, why then I should fail,

knowing my best endeavors had not been spared in the Colonies' cause. I began to expend them at once.

Of much—nay most—of that desperate task I keep no memory, the horror of its conclusion wiping out the majority of its details; but there remains the picture of the dim light, the heaped bales, the occasionally peeping rats, and myself, seen as in a magic mirror, sawing —boring—plugging—my hands blistered, my back nigh split, the sweat adrop in my eyes—toiling at a job that I did not understand and racing the swift Angel of Time. I was retarded by a score of drawbacks, but ever aided by fear of failure for our little army and dread of the victory of the hangman's noose over me.

My work had been begun at the foot of the ladder and pressed forward, since I planned to open the last-made hole first and then retreat along my line, releasing the other plugs as I went. That final one was started when there came an interruption: a dull reverberation sounded from somewhere outside the *Vigilant*—some considerable distance away—and then across her bows a sort of whistling scream that I had learned to know upon my arrival in these unhappy waters.

It was a cannon-shot. Some watching craft of War-

ren's squadron of small boats had fired the order: "Heave to!"

Of course that command would go unheeded—of course Barbetorte would sail on. Well, as he sailed, I must toil.

My efforts were redoubled. There was about one hazard in twenty that the Commodore's flotilla, if it was all on hand, could stop the *Vigilant*. But how much chance was there that it would all be on hand?

I hurried.

Barbetorte heave to? Why, before I had finished that opening which engaged me when the English shot-of-warning was fired, an explosion from above me sent me staggering headlong down the rest of the aisle! The old pirate was making double answer: he was resuming full sail ahead and firing one of his heavy forward guns, not as any caution, but in the endeavor to achieve a direct hit.

My partial upset had brought me hard against the timbers of the very prow, and I leaned there to recover breath and equilibrium. The sound of rushing water was loud in my ears from some distance upwards. Just at this point the sea's pressure must be heaviest; just at this point an aperture would do the greatest damage.

Why not make one?

Bit and auger were clutched in one hand. I fell to at the task, working at about the level of my shoulder and with all my will.

Another shot from somewhere to starboard. It whistled amidships: the English were replying to Barbetorte in kind—they now meant destruction. The battle had begun.—But I worked on.

A third shot—now from a point to port.—Those forward timbers were old; they were thin; my auger sank deep and swift.

The *Vigilant* answered her opponents with a salvo.—I threw a shoulder against the bit-top and flashed the brace 'round and 'round. A cold spray of liquid salt squirted into my hot face.

A fourth English shot—and a crash behind me. The French vessel lurched hard to starboard.—My auger (it was the expander) flushed clear through, and a stream as from some Titanic hose poured over me.

I had made no plug for this unplanned hole—nor was there any possibility to plug it. The pressure was great beyond all my calculations: the water leaped in like that cataract I have heard tell of at Niagara.

It and the *Vigilant's* lurch luckily threw me to one

side. I turned in the direction of the ladder—I could not see it!

Those insufficient bracings had given way, and the forehold's cargo was shifting. Already between me and the ladder a high rampart had risen. Scores of boxes of enormous weight were crashing toward it out of the darkness.

There was not one second to think of bravery. My sole choice lay between drowning under that spouting hole or being crushed to a pulp by the riotous cargo on the one hand, and, on the other, scaling this shaking, dark wall of freight. I splashed through the water, got my fingers into a cleft between two bales and pulled myself up.

They tottered under me. Something fell with a tremendous splash behind me. Another box toppled against the base of the pile and rocked it; but I had to go on, and did. I reached the top.

It was only then I realized how I had worked on that last hole without the candle, which must have been left behind me when the opening shot from the *Vigilant* sent me sprawling forward and my resolution was formed to bore through the prow. It was only then, moreover, that I understood why my dip's light was not needed:

the preliminary careening of this ship which carried me had knocked over a bag of some inflammable material; this the candle ignited, and the mass was ablaze.

Yes, I could see all too clearly now! Behind me rose the water. Before me leaped the flame. But the ladder lay before me, too: my hope of safety was to dive through the fire.

I jumped—fell in the midst of it—stood up—stumbled—pitched ahead—and collapsed at the ladder's foot. As I did so, another box crushed upon the flames and belched out added fuel.

I was badly singed, but not burnt and had had the instinctive wit—perhaps the memory of another and nearly equally terrible fire that was at the end of the career of my Uncle Simon Scull, Ranger of the Manor in my home in Pennsylvania—to hold my breath. I tore off my smouldering jacket and beat my scorching leggins. Billows of smoke rolled hungrily over me: in a few moments more, I should strangle. The red light of a conflagration, already flamingly alive, made the choking gray clouds incandescent; leaping to my knees, barking at me—literally barking—snapping in their rage and terror—a regiment of rats assailed me.

I swarmed up the ladder. I attacked the hatch.

It was battened down. It was battened tight—and the hammers that I had relied on were lying somewhere back there in either the water or the flame.

CHAPTER XXVIII

SEA-BATTLE: RUNNING THE BLOCKADE

MANY'S the time since then that my shrieking nightmares have relimned that scene for me, the flames turning dun, shot with yellow-tipped vermilion tongues which darted up to lick the swaying shadows of the shifting cargo. The air suffocated me, the terror-maddened rats jumped high. Overhead, guns banged; down here in my furnace-prison huge boxes scraped, toppled, crashed—the water roared through the spreading aperture behind their lessening rampart —the flames crackled—the swift smoke-tide rose.

From foolish hammering upon those stubborn planks which shut me in, my knuckles bled; but to their pain I was insensible. Already sore stricken with fright, I made no doubt that my end had come, albeit praying as never before—no, not even when under Hendrick Van Veen's—or Esau Pencarris'—pistol that afternoon, nor

yet when the unseen assassin held me in the death-grip on my dreadful night journey Bostonwards. The *Vigilant's* starboard-list was increasing: I prayed she might go down and drown me ere smoke and fire accomplished my destruction.

Yet it was this very list which effected my complete rescue from the hold. Any conflagration might have long continued without the ship's officers, in the heat of battle, discovering its existence; but the tilt of their decks they might not lay entirely to round-shot wounds: it seems that certain of the crew were ordered below to investigate.

As I hung to the upper rounds of the ladder, gasping, and with momentarily weakening toes and fingers, that detail of sailors ripped off the hatch-top. Therewith a great gust of sulphurous smoke swept at them, and I leaped after it and was rolled—blackened, scorched, more dead than alive—along the decline of a steep, but air-pure, deck.

This place was all but deserted. So much my bruised mind absorbed before, huddled in the corner whereto the boat's list had consigned me, I sank down a shallow ditch of unconsciousness like that to which I had succumbed in the rowboat.

Nobody could have noted my appearance: the investigating seamen were driven back by the smoke-cloud, and it sheltered me until I was out of their way, after which they, recovering breath and descending on their mission to the hold, had too serious matters to deal with for any memory of me—as, in one measure or another, was probably then and later the condition of all the crew and officers. I came to myself when they rushed back with their alarmed report written plain upon their staring faces, and I lay still until they, and so many others as could be spared from the fight against human enemies, returned to do battle with the allied elements attacking the *Vigilant's* bowels.

Then I crawled up the nearest companionway. I crawled past the gun-deck, full of furious clamor, and out upon the main-deck, where a round two-dozen other cannon were in hot action and whence the struggle for the relief of Louisburg and the defeat of my General's enterprise was being masterfully directed. A broken gun stood deserted on the high-pitched port side, and the scupper beside it, with a handy scupper-hole, afforded both shelter and a post of observation. I crouched in the shelter and gazed about.

So here was Nicholas Rowntree, temporarily safe

again, and there, all about him, raged red war. What a veritable hell war is, he straightway realized.

The pallid moon shone directly overhead and partially lighted the acrid powder-smoke that draped this French ship like a pall. The tilted deck was almost awash to port, but the rest of it looked a very madhouse, and, my first interest being in the fortunes of the Colonials, my eyes sought the sea.

Across the lower rail, the view was clear, for on that side fighting was over: in plain sight, an armed sloop was going down by her stern, her gleaming prow clear of the water, her mast well-nigh parallel to it, mainsail and spinnaker entangled. What was left of her small crew were putting off in a little boat of some sort, but she still flew the English flag.

Through the scupper-hole beside me I could not see so well, since on this quarter the guns blazed, and their fumes hung heavy. Still, I distinguished enough to make sure of three encouraging points.

First: We were drawing close to shore—while I was still shut in the forehold, we must have entered the bay. From its northern end, where we of course were, that estuary was new to my sight, for Pepperell's expedition had anchored in its southern extremity, and this early

evening's fog had hidden it during my rowboat-journey; nevertheless, sighting no fortress, I fixed our present position as still well above Louisburg harbor—Captain Barbetorte's goal—and guessed we were straight off the spot whence I had recently embarked.

Next: About a mile distant, due ahead, a ledge of nasty rocks snarled out of the sea, breaking against them angrily. They had an ugly look.

Third: Although a strip of open water lay northwest-by-west of these, beyond it, due west and therefore turning our port bow, rode another ship—the only British craft, except for the sinking sloop, that had apparently been near enough to join battle with the blockade-runner. The only one and scarce half this Frenchman's size, but she flew the Commodore's ensign. I knew her without it: Warren's flagship, the *Olympian!*

"Bang!" went one of Barbetorte's guns three yards from where I lay—and nearly deafened me.

Battles I have seen amany, but seldom one more desperate than this. The boat that bore me, and yet that I wanted beaten, was badly aleak and worse afire, but grimly determined to make port around her opponent's to-be-stricken body before the destruction of all her foodstuffs could be accomplished; the Englishman

was like a boy in the path of a giant, but if the giant was a Goliath, the boy was a David. What transpired aboard the *Olympian* was beyond my ken; to the slaughter launched from the *Vigilant* and wrought against her I was a witness far too close for comfort.

You hear the expression "to smell powder" and think you know what it means when you have fired your fowling-piece at a bevy of wild ducks flying up the Susquehanna. I had inhaled that sharp effluvium freed in fight during some little engagements of the Maryland Border War and thought myself thereby qualified as a soldier more than by my service on Pepperell's staff. But now I was to "smell powder" in the full sense of that term, seeing the worst effects of this explosive for the first time in my experience.

The overheated air sparkled with visible death; it was brown to the sight and arrows to the eyeballs. It tasted of sharp nitre and stank of sulphur. To right and left of where I crouched, the thundering guns now belched out their deadly missiles. On that sloping deck, which was slippery with spray and dotted by blood-pools, barefoot and sweating French fellows, stripped to the waist —many bleeding and all smoke-stained—served the cannon in a splendid exhibition of calm courage and dis-

ciplined endurance that taught me how to respect an enemy. Round-shot spewed from us toward the *Olympian;* from the *Olympian,* round-shot flew over our heads—rattled down spars about our ringing ears—now struck the *Vigilant's* sides—sometimes tore fatally through her rail among us. The abrupt falling of the killed, the shrieks of the wounded, the writhing figures in the crimson puddles, the yet more awful quiet of the dead—all this was what it meant to " smell powder " and what filled my sickened senses now.

Every little while, men jumped out of that hatch which had given me exit and ran toward the poop, where Barbetorte stood like Satan in a fighting Hell, to report the progress of flood and fire. The presence of those dangers was known to the crew, the news having spread rapidly, and sometimes, as the messengers passed, the gunners would ask for news and an interval between explosions render the shouted replies audible. Those grew less and less encouraging for the *Vigilant,* and soon it became clear that even her captain's determination must weaken. Unhandicapped, she could have sunk the *Olympian,* already badly crippled, before dawn, but she could not hope successfully to fight at the same time both a plucky rival and a ravaging disease.

At last, Barbetorte came down and passed me on his way below to inspect the nether damage with his own eyes. When he returned, I got a good look at him. Hat and coat were off; his gray snake-locks seemed to curl with rage, and, under his bushy brows, his eyes gleamed horribly. He laid hold of and shook the officer that strode beside him.

"Where's that cursed boy?" he yelled.

That he might well ask. I squeezed tight against the battered gun-carriage. The questioned officer's answer did not reach my ears; his head-shake, however, was sufficient.

"God grant he's charcoal!" Barbetorte continued. But his seamanship overcame his personal rancor. "We cannot save our own boat," he said, "but, by Heaven, we will capture the enemy's and sail her into Louisburg. Make ready the grapnels—pipe your men—serve out boarding-pistols and cutlasses to all hands!" He flung up a hand. "The wind holds—I'm for the wheel!"

Volleying orders as he went, he charged on to direct his crushing manœuvre.

And the thing was done in incredible time. Sails that had been struck for the fight—since the *Olympian* could outsail the *Vigilant*—bloomed on the masts like flowers

blossoming by enchantment. The French guns ceased; the men, armed for boarding and its hand-to-hand encounters, crouched all along the broken port-rail. As if it were some wounded monster that turns upon a young hunter, the great vessel swerved, executed a double turning that was like the letter *S*, and so, with her good side forward, bore down upon the *Olympian* at such an angle as would bring two-thirds of the Frenchman's main-deck flush with that of the Englishman.

Nobody would have eyes for me now—or, if everybody had—what matter? I stood up.

Not for a whole minute—upon that occasion! I saw —I could almost touch—the waiting ranks of outnumbered British marines, also armed and ready, their faces set and desperate. Then a tremendous bump, and I fell in the scuppers as the long scrape of shipside against shipside followed.

Shots—and with a chorus of sharp cries running under the shots, the French leaped the *Olympian* bulwarks. The *Vigilant's* man nearest me was tossed back—he seemed the only one that was—and fell, all bloody, on the far side of my incapacitated cannon. Scarce knowing why, I seized his pistol and clambered in the attackers' rear.

CHAPTER XXIX

SEA-BATTLE: HAND-TO-HAND

LIKE a line of breakers on the shore, the men of the *Vigilant* vaulted the bulwarks of the *Olympian.* They swirled up, bent over and crashed down upon the farther side.

When you have stood on a hilltop and watched the August rain sweep across some narrow wheat-field all ready for the harvest, there has been presented to your sight something such as was shown mine in the moment that followed this boarding-movement. The French were at first an irresistible storm before which their English opponents bent much as the grain bends backward before the storm.

I saw those British marines and sailors lean and fall. I even had a glimpse of Commodore Warren himself behind them, his hatless head swathed in a bloody band-

age, a pistol in each hand, and indigo despair upon his face as he fired over his men's heads into the enemy's midst and his drowned voice shouted the encouragement of despair.

Cutlasses flashed like strokes of white lightning in the resultant commingling, foe with foe. Powder rattled like hill-thunder. I found myself precariously balanced on the *Olympian's* starboard rail, while Frenchmen cut loose the smoking *Vigilant,* her blistering main-deck now emitting gray spirals, and left her deserted and adrift. What remained of Warren's forces fought feverishly, but were being steadily rolled toward the flagship's prow.

The impartial moon made day of night, shining careless of that carnage, calmly and unemotionally illuminating its spectacle of slaughter. A whirlpool of faces painted to the shade of blackamoors, vanquishers and victims revolved below me, but the victims ever retreated forward. Why no stray bullet reached my head, around which many whistled, only Heaven can tell; yet there I swayed back and forth unharmed, too horribly fascinated by the fight to gather my wits together and join it in the Colonies' cause—now trying to plumb the stream of struggle, now glancing where it had already

passed, leaving ghostly, as they had fallen, most of those who paid war's price, while some, more grisly still, rolled stiffly in the track of combat with each pitch of the ship.

One of those movements of the *Olympian* nearly threw me. I slipped—clutched the rail—only just saved myself.

I looked backward: had I fallen, it would have been into the sea, for the now vehemently smoking *Vigilant* was rods away.

I looked in the direction in which the *Olympian* was headed: she was making toward land and near that dangerous reef noted by me when first surveying her position, but safe southwestward of those rocks.

And *then,* I looked at her wheel: it was no human power that guided her—though several of those wandering bullets had sung close by me and left me unscathed, one fired the helmsman's way had found a fatal lodging; he was stretched dead at his post.

Thereat indeed came at last upon me shame for my idleness and energy for performance. Nicholas Rowntree was an officer among the besiegers of Louisburg, yet he had stood still to look on while the crew of their naval-arm's flagship fought a losing fight. My cheeks burned in humiliation, but my eyes saw a way to service.

One weapon more or less upon the side of Warren's men might matter little; but it was still possible to save—at the probable price of my own life and the lives of others—the honor of the expedition's flotilla.

To-day, young folk call me old, and I dare say I am aging. My blood is somewhat thinner and runs slower than then. I ask myself: Why did I feel as I did? The *Vigilant's* supplies, so necessary to the French, were lost, and that was thanks to me. What if the *Olympian* was captured?

But then things were different. Immediately my resolution was taken. Headed as we were, and as the steady flow of wind and water appeared determined to take us, we should clear the reef, soon after which, the *Olympian* would be a prize in the hands of French Barbetorte. Well, one frail human hand could mayhap prevent that—if the hand were fearless. No, our flagship should never be the enemy's: I would take her wheel and pile her on those rocks!

With what infinite care I made my way to the helm around the fighting mobs must be left you to imagine, for it is beyond my powers to describe. Enough that I reached my goal—bestrode the corpse of my predecessor—laid eager hands upon the spokes of the wheel. I was

the raiders' master—had become so under their very noses!

Well astern of us, the doomed *Vigilant* was a floating tower of flame. Still but a few paces worse than amidships, that curling serpent-fight went on: my gaze could not any more distinguish one party from the other. Close off our starboard bow, in its share of moonlight (for the smoke of the guns was far behind) the water-drenched reef glistened like an old wolf's jagged teeth, the balked sea foaming around them as if it were a mad wolf's spittle.

Was it time? No—not yet! I must wait at least a half-minute more—three-quarters, to make absolutely sure.

How readily did the *Olympian* answer her helm? I did not know. I did not know how readily any ship of her tonnage ought to. I dared take no chances: I *must* wait.

I counted seconds by the throbbing of the pulses in my temples. One—two ——

Would any of the French see me?

Or would any of the English—and mistake me for a Frenchman?

Three ——

Out of the thick of the fight staggered a bloody figure —Barbetorte himself. He brained an enemy—shook off the protesting arms of a friend. He ran straight at me.

His face was wet from a sabre-cut across the forehead, but it was evident that the hurt was only superficial. His wide mouth showed the black hole among his teeth. He brandished a cutlass and raised a pistol.

My hands had been resting on the wheel-spokes. I released them now. In the belt of the dead helmsman at my feet was thrust a two-barrelled weapon as good—if it was loaded!—as either of those with which the advancing Breton threatened me. I stooped—whipped it out—levelled it.

He was near now—very near—Barbetorte. His pistol reached a line with his shoulder—and a fair line for my head.

If it had only been more sudden! But he wanted to make sure of his aim. If only he hadn't spared me that threatened flogging aboard the *Vigilant*—for I this instant remembered that he *had* spared me it! Yet it was at this moment my life or his, I thought; his eyes were terrible indeed; his index-finger crooked over that trigger ——

I fired.

My nerves were shaking like a leaf in a gale, but I fired first. His shot flew clear as he fell. For he did fall—not three yards from me, he went down.

I tore my glance away. Yes, there was the reef hard by. Almost missed. Now or never! Now—then death.

I flung myself upon the wheel and threw it over hard. The *Olympian* hesitated. Was I too late?—No, she trembled—swung—was caught by one of those angry waves—was lifted high. With a splintering smash, she struck.

That concussion tumbled me over upon my victim, my pistol spun away, and my head bashed the planks with a dazzling bang. The sky seemed to swing back and forth, and even Barbetorte to move, and the helmsman with him.

However, it could have been for an instant only that I remained recumbent. The next, and I sat up to a painful understanding of the suddenly changed situation; the ship had her nose so high and dry in air, and had keeled over so far to port, that, in the bright night, my view was unobstructed: I saw my amateur seamanship as having overshot its mark and my whole mad action as unduly precipitate.

In the first place, the *Olympian* was piled so loftily

that, held fast by those tall and strong ledge-fangs, she might stick here a twelvemonth, instead of immediately slipping off and sinking according to my plan. In the second place, she might have been saved for her true masters if I had kept her on her course: the struggle, still amidships, was now clearly not progressing quite as the raiders wished, and from no great distance astern of us approached two ships easily recognizable as members of the Commodore's flotilla, rescue-bound.

These things I saw, and my folly upbraided itself. And then —— Why, then Captain Barbetorte came appallingly to life!

He had been no more than stunned by my shot grazing him above one ear. Chagrined and enraged, he sprang to his feet before realization of my poor aim came home to me—and he picked me up with him. He rushed with me to the rail.

I waved my impotent hands—kicked my heels. It was all vain: his embrace enveloped me completely; he might have held a mere baby in his arms.

" Thees, it should have been long seence accomplish'! " he bawled in his detestable English. " Oot you go! "

As if I were a doomed kitten, he flung me head foremost into the sea!

I was shot into the void, and my single scream died in the noise of that fight still raging on the flagship's main-deck. Who was there with eyes disengaged to see me—or, seeing, with the will to help?

Long, lurid streaks of light flashed upward as I hurtled down. The waters received me with a crash. They were bitter cold; they roared in my ears. So far I went and so fast, it seemed sure my skull would be cracked against the rocky bottom. Yet gradually the pace slackened—finally it stopped—and I, wildly beating with the palms of hands and feet, began to rise.

When I reached the surface, my gaze sought the *Olympian:* she lay behind me, and my descent and rising could not have been so direct as they had appeared, for she lay a goodly distance behind—and there was that old privateersman, Barbetorte, shaking a fist at me over her rail. No going back: he had probably intended giving me a fighting-chance with the water, but was reasonably certain to shoot me if I attempted to gain the ship or the reef. Somewhere beyond the *Olympian,* the *Vigilant* was burning to death, her forehold already full of water not sufficiently powerful to quench the risen flame; the little sloop had doubtless long since gone

under, and those other of Warren's vessels were still too far away. My sole chance was the shore.

Somehow, I made it, at last. The tide was with me and the swell helped. I would beat my way up a sweeping crest and slide down its farther side; when very tired, I floated—and I was very tired indeed and many times tempted to give up before I reached land; but my resolution did hold out, and Nicholas Rowntree was never happier than when, a well-nigh exhausted leg trailing downwards, its toes touched hard sand and he could walk erect once more.

So I made dry land, but I was badly wearied and quickly dropped down to rest beside a low rock. For quite fifteen minutes I must have panted there before a queer sound set all my senses alert. It was the sound of someone digging in pebbly earth.

Why should anybody be so engaged out here in the neighborhood of a beleaguered fortress and inside the French lines? The spot was north of Louisburg; so there was not need of entrenchments. I raised my head.

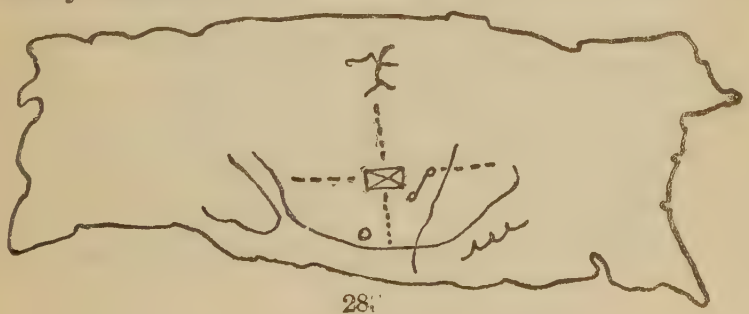
Out in the bay, the *Vigilant* flamed, and the high-pitched hull of the *Olympian* was visible, but the noise of the hand-to-hand fighting was dulled by distance, and the rescue-ships probably dared not fire upon their

commodore's vessel. I peeped over the rock: here ashore, although the moon now declined, her rays were still brilliant.

I was lying on a rounded point of land where, evidently, hard ground came close to the sea-edge. Near by, a little stream emptied. Perhaps ten paces back rose an old tree, decapitated long ago by some bolt of lightning, but with three hardy branches alive, one pointing up-shore, another down, and the third inland. Midway between it and the tip of the land, a man bent over a spade and dug feverishly.

When somebody has had your life in his hands, you do not require a lanthorn to recognize him at the next encounter. This digger—I could see his long, tobacco-chewing jaws awork—was Mahogany's " Black Cornishman ": he was my enemy Van Veen!

At that, the memory of the Sachem's map came clearly back to me:



SPANISH DOLLARS

This tiny peninsula was the hiding-place of those 50,000 Spanish dollars which King Philip's grandson had buried—and now the boatswain of the *Helicon* and leader of her mutineers, the murderous spy of Boston, was digging up that treasure.

CHAPTER XXX

JENKINS'S EAR

IT was clear enough. His proffered treason repudiated, his chance lost to disinter that prize-money in the character of a deserter to the Colonials, Van Veen was executing the first move in some desperate plan for quitting the scene of hostilities entirely and somehow sledging this stolen wealth across the wilderness. Perhaps he hoped to buy a ship with it, and her crew, and so gain the West Indies. Perhaps ——

At that sight, however, my fatigue dropped from me as a winter-coat is cast aside before the first full sun of Spring. I might have erred in driving the *Olympian* upon those rocks, but at least I had destroyed the food-supplies of the *Vigilant* upon which Louisburg counted. The expected Abenaki reënforcements remained; but this so-called Van Veen was the go-between 'twixt their

people and the French and had admitted that those red men would sever allegiance if informed of the southern tribes' refusal to rise against us—what if I, who had always wanted to bring a prisoner to General Sandy, should take this spy (and his money!) and then somehow arrange to have the Abenakis informed of the truth of his and the Frenchman's deception?

Was the Black Cornishman alone?

The moon was drooping slowly down the sky, but it still shone bright. Where Van Veen worked with persistent greed, a little tongue of silver prevailed, which the grave-like hole that he was digging received and engulfed in a blot as if it were so much ink. The digger bent above it was a shadow, but a lonely one.

Nor was any other figure recognizable upon the surrounding land. That half-dead tree had no neighbors for a score of yards, except what seemed a shadowy stump of considerable breadth some thirty feet inland—a stump that had escaped my observation at my first reconnaissance.

A dozen plans collided in my head; but, though the murderer was unaware of my presence, he remained the stronger, and I was both wearied and unarmed. Did I dare trust to a sudden rush? I was about to stake my

all upon such a scheme, to be followed by the free use of my bare hands, when it struck me as the proper thing to let the digger first lift the treasure: if my desperate resolve succeeded, he would then have fittingly saved me the trouble of lifting those dollars which would retrieve my father's fortunes—my father's and mine, for was not this treasure-trove, and was not Mahogany dead in the swamp?

Van Veen was standing in the hole now and tossing up dirt harder than ever. The right second would come soon, for I would leap upon that rogue's back when both his thieving hands were occupied in raising the buried sea-chest that must contain the *Helicon's* gold.

I gave another look about me. All was still—all was unchanged.

Yet *was* it?

I must indeed be worn out in mind as well as body. That shadowy stump seemed nearer.

I rubbed my eyes and smiled at my delusion. The stump, of course, must be where it had always been. Turning my gaze to Van Veen, I saw him throw away his spade and bend double in the hole.

Now was my chance. He was lifting something out! I leaned forward to run. Alas, that night's work, end-

ing in the cold struggle with the waves, had exacted its toll: my muscles would not quickly enough respond to my brain's orders. Before I could start, the spy had heaved out a respectably sized chest and, following it, stooped over his find.

Well, the opportunity still served. I crouched lower for a spring.

What made me again look a trifle aside? I do not know. I can only tell you that I did it—and saw that stump risen to the stature of a giant-sized man. The waning moonlight struck a face—a shock of hair, daring eyes, stubborn nose and now rapidly moving lips. It was the ghost of good old Mahogany.

" Come out o' that, you son of a sea-cook: I've got you *and* the dollars at last—and if that's not Gospel, you may scuttle *me!* "

He scorned firearms (I saw him throw away a pistol) and charged—no, not a ghost, but a vast living human being with one dragging, and plainly wounded, leg—straight at the piratical ex-boatswain. Van Veen turned and stooped to recover a weapon, but Mahogany threw himself upon the fellow ere that movement could achieve its purpose. Before you could say " Jack Robinson," the two closed and there commenced a rash con-

tention to the death in which each participant depended entirely upon his striking fists and clutching claws.

It was a fight of shadows, but I have to confess that Van Veen fascinated my observation. His opponent, although wounded in the surprise of us that afternoon, had a large advantage of strength and weight, no less the spy—a coward when he could afford to be—fought back like a rat in a corner. Wretch he might often have been, cut-throat I knew him to be; yet, faced with the fatal alternative, he produced readily enough a ferocious, if unscrupulous, bravery.

"It's me!" I cried. "It's Nicky!"—And at that I threw myself forward.

I never reached my goal. Bare of torso, glittering with war-paint—three Indians came noiselessly out of nowhere and, moving calmly between us, arrested us in the crisis of intense action as if we were all changed by some wizard's wand into three separate statues. The moon was very low now, but I could see that they were red men of an unfamiliar sort, and Van Veen's first words confirmed my guess that he had happened to appoint this peninsula as a rendezvous with the longed-for reënforcements—that here were the advance scouts of the oncoming Abenakis.

"I have been waiting for you!" he declared, at once turning from us, since we dared not, as he thought, harm him now—and so upsetting was his relief that he spoke the language of the white men of Louisburg. "Waiting! You are late—and see what is upon me: two Englishmen. Seize them!"

He was understood: that savage trio faced to Mahogany and me. I saw the cruel smile of the essential red man; I saw raised hands.

"This fellow's messages have tricked your chiefs," I cried: "the southern Indians—the Indians of New England—haven't risen!"

In startlingly hybrid French Mahogany bellowed: "'Tis true that, 'tis Gospel true, and if it isn't ——"

But Van Veen, freeing his mouth of a great cud of tobacco, interrupted: "I tell you these are Englishmen, and so of course they lie."

What would have happened had there been no other interruption I do not know. Probably the spy would have prevailed, for my wits were plain addled. But another, and yet more surprising, disturbance there immediately and prodigiously was. Out of the very earth —up from behind the very pile of it made by the Black Cornishman in the course of his greedy excavations—

the figure of a fourth Indian arose. And, in the last light of the moon, I knew him: he was that one Mic-Mac who had escaped the double traitor's pistols when Van Veen captured me in the swamp.

The dark spy recognized him, too, and wheeled—turned to run. But too late. With exactly this moment in mind, that Mic-Mac must have doubled on his tracks from the scene of his comrades' murder and followed the deadeye sailor ever since. He gripped one of the Cornishman's wrists, dived into his clothes, brought forth the two pieces of bark that were the Sachem's legacy and handed them to the Abenakis.

"Shall *we* run?" I whispered to Mahogany.

He shook his red head. "I'll die first!"

By the last rays of the moon those newly arrived savages read Alexander's message with all the dignity of as many colonial judges hearing testimony in a capital case—and meanwhile the Mic-Mac held his prisoner fast.

It was almost at once over, that rude trial. I knew it, and experienced a horrid nausea. I saw that the readers of the bark recognized it as an authentic message from the Sachem. I saw Van Veen's long nose and narrow face narrow and lengthen—saw its swarthiness turn a dirty gray—and, as the moon waned, saw that

cold mouth quiver—heard a shrill wail of protest—and hid my eyes.

Van Veen, or Esau Pencarris—God knows what name he had real title to!—was a dead man when I dared raise my lids; the echo of the snap and cough as one of his deceived Abenakis broke the traitor's neck across a careless knee, still sounded from the woods. A dead man—and a scalp.

As silently as they had come, the executioners left. The accusing Mic-Mac went with them—and with them Louisburg's hope of reënforcements. The moon sank. Mahogany and I buried Van Veen in that grave-like hole he had digged to excavate the treasure; the treasure, by an immensely roundabout way, we lugged into the swamp (it was too heavy to lug farther), there cached it—and so, just after dawn, came safely into our own lines.

"You know they call me Jenkins," said Mahogany—this was while we yet stumbled through the morass, but after we had passed the region of the French outposts. "Well, and why shouldn't they? For Jenkins I was born, matey, and Roger I was christened: Roger, son of Thomas Jenkins and Maria his wife, as you may see

upon the register of the parish church of Cadishead, Warrington, in the County of Lancashire to this very day."

After the manner of all mariners, he had a hard time starting his history, being anxious to start it far enough back. Moreover, thereafter he was full of details and given to excursions, so I shorten it to this:

Every history of recent England will tell you that, in the late 'thirties of the present century, British boats played havoc, during nominal peace, with Spanish ships upon the Spanish Main, and that the Spaniards, in retaliation, were overly strict in their search for contraband on such English craft as legitimately put into their ports. Those same histories narrate how, his captain being ill, a young mate named Jenkins brought a harmless merchantman into Porto Bello and how the Guard Costa, angered at finding no contraband, tore off that mate's ear and bade him take it to his king. Jenkins, we all know, did as bid, appealing to Parliament, but we all know that he secured no redress therefrom—and thereafter the histories are silent.

Well, my Mahogany was this Jenkins. His one desire in life was to gain recompense for that injury—his revenge, he called it—so he joined Anson's expedition,

sailing as an officer on the *Helicon* and escaping mutineers and their Indian captors as Van Veen had partially described. From then forward, he sought the Cornishman with that unconquerable energy which no reverses could quench—came across his trail to the Connecticut Valley—followed it too late—pursued it to Boston—to Louisburg—and was only now rewarded.

The rest? The so-called Van Veen had sought the treasure as soon as, after reporting my presence within the French lines, he could get away on the excuse of meeting the Abenakis. Mahogany, counting me lost, sped on a similar quest as speedily as that trivial wound permitted which my Mic-Mac captors and I—and Jenkins himself at first—thought fatal.

As the giant made an end to his yarn, I fished something from a pocket.

" Here's your ear," said I.

He fronted me in the darkness. The boyish smile of his broad face I easily guessed:

" Why, mate Nicky, shall I again take back what the English Parliament and its German King refused? I don't want that ear any more: I've got paid Spanish dollars for it—at last. Blast my timbers, I tell you what you must do: keep it to remember me by."

What more remains to be told?

Tatters near smothered me with caresses—he *hadn't* starved! The *Olympian* was retaken by her sister-ship, and Barbetorte with her, I'm glad to say not greatly the worse for my wounding of him or any other's—and he even spoke highly of me to Commodore Warren: years afterward, he sailed, an old but still doughty captain, to the American Colonies' assistance under Rochambeau.

Louisburg was harassed by Vaughan's finally further advanced guns, which burnt one of the enemy's magazines of naval stores and justified Pepperell's strategy; eight English seventy-fours sailed to the harbor-mouth to reënforce Warren, and under their protection new batteries were planted; we made ready a thousand scaling-ladders, but they were never used. The city, her food-supplies lost with the *Vigilant,* her Indians having deserted after the revelations of Van Veen's perfidy concerning their New England brethren's lack of coöperation, and her garrison in mutiny—at last sent out a flag of truce on June 16th, and Cornet Nicholas Rowntree, "because of his knowledge of the French language" (Barbetorte could have perhaps told something about that!) entered the fortress with our emissaries and acted as their interpreter: the iron Cross which I took from

the market-place is in Harvard's library to this moment. With dawn of the day following, "the Gibraltar of Canada" was ours (I glimpsed sullen Captain Roberts of the *Spuyten Duyvil* among the prisoners); the Lilies of France were lowered and in their stead were flown, not the British colors offered by Commodore Warren, but the flags of those American Colonies represented by troops in Pepperell's victorious expedition, my own Pennsylvania among them. If, three years later, the European treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle restored to our quondam enemies what we had won at so high a price, that surrender was the bargaining of kings and the trickery of diplomatists; it could not rob us of our glory: an army of raw American farmers, fishermen and mechanics had captured the New World's strongest fortress and won for Britain her greatest success in all the War of the Austrian Succession.

The very packet which was to bear our great news back to Boston had brought letters north—and one, dated from my Hempfield home, for me. Writ in my father's bold hand it was: his shamefully unawaited response to my request for leave to enlist—and what, think you, was the manner of his decision?

" 'Tis well intentioned of you to ask permission," his true pen assured me; " but should it be necessary? This country is now our country, and we are proudly numbered amongst its loyal citizens; so, as to joining its military service, why, *in any affair touching the Colonies' honor, my dear son may always take my permission for granted!*"

Personal gossip travels fast and far amongst unoccupied soldiers; our swamp-outposts grumbled that they should have a share of the *Helicon's* treasure as having been reburied near their territory, but the General ruled otherwise: under French colonial law of that time, he said, treasure-trove belonged to its finder, and those Spanish dollars had been found on land which, at the moment of the finding, belonged to France. Mahogany wanted me to take half, but I would accept only $15,000, which restored my father's fortunes, reëstablished me at Harvard College (where I paid somewhat more attention to my lessons than before I had learnt the worth of them) and, finally, forms the foundation of such wealth as I shall bequeath to you, my heirs, when God calls me to my final accounting.

General Sandy had heard more than the truth about me, and, the day after our occupation of Louisburg,

summoned both Mahogany and me to an interview. I can recall his metallic words exactly:

"Private Jenkins, in consideration of its results—which *you* did not contemplate—I overlook your dereliction. Cornet Rowntree, Heaven has favored your headstrong character and molded it to the Colonies' advantage—but I advise you both to learn discipline. If I mistake not—and this is for your own ears only—the time is near at hand when America will need her disciplined sons for a war to secure her proper rights from England—and that will mean her sovereign independence. *Eh!*"

As we came out of headquarters, "Should old Sandy be right," bellowed Mahogany, "why, I'll remember that I got my ear-payment not from Parliament, but thanks to you Colonials—and the Colonies may count on Roger Jenkins."

How securely they counted on him the story of his service under your grandfather in our glorious Revolution was destined amply to testify, but, even at that moment in Louisburg, I thanked him.

"Oh," said he with his wide wink and screwed-up nose, "I mean it—and if that's not Gospel, you may scuttle *me*."

Tatters, every brown hair erect and at a separate angle, had been excitedly barking at our heels. "Woof —woof!" he now applauded—and I knew that he was a good American, too.

THE END

FRIENDS
OF ACPL